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**EXTERNAL EVALUATION
OF
LAC REGIONAL PARKS IN PERIL PROJECT**

Submitted to
UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Contract No. AEP-I-05-96-90016-00

Submitted by
TROPICAL RESEARCH and DEVELOPMENT, INC,
Gainesville, Florida, USA

May, 1998

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The evaluation team

- From Tropical Research and Development, Inc.
Laurence Hausman: team leader, institutional relationships and strengthening
Allen Putney: management of protected areas
Lorenzo Rosenzweig: conservation finance
- From WIDTECH, Development Alternatives, Inc.
Mary Hill Rojas: community development, participation and gender

May, 1998

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Acronyms

CA	critical assumptions (USAID)
CNA	Comisión Nacional del Agua (México)
CONAP	Consejo Nacional de Áreas Protegidas (Guatemala)
FANP	Fondo de Áreas Naturales Protegidas (México)
FMCN	Fondo Mexicano para la Conservación de la Naturaleza
FY	fiscal year (U.S. Government)
GEF	Global Environment Facility (World Bank)
HEP	human ecological profile
IHN	Instituto de Historia Natural de Chiapas (México)
INEFAN	Instituto Ecuatoriano Forestal y Áreas Naturales y Vida Silvestre (Ecuador)
INRENA	Instituto Nacional de Recursos Naturales (Peru)
IR	intermediate result
IUCN	The World Conservation Union
LAC	Latin America and Caribbean Bureau, a division within USAID
LACD	Latin America and Caribbean Division of the Nature Conservancy
NGO	nongovernmental organization
PALOMAP	“Participación local en el manejo de áreas protegidas” (“Local participation in the management of protected areas”), a program of The Nature Conservancy
PIP	Parks in Peril
R4	Results Review and Resource Request (USAID)
REA	rapid ecological assessment
RSD/E	Regional Sustainable Development/Environment, an office within USAID
SO	strategic objective
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WIDTECH	“Women in Development Technical Assistance Project,” a USAID program

Tropical Treasures

The wave of political and economic liberalization that has swept across Latin America in the past decade has brought with it a huge influx of investments from abroad to extract metals, oil and lumber. Many of the concessions that have been granted lie in unexplored areas that harbor

some of the Earth's most sensitive and diverse ecosystems. The investment boom, particularly by large American and Canadian companies, is expected to continue well into the next century.



While the financial benefits to companies and to newly developing economies can be enormous, these activities can cause direct damage through land-clearing for facilities and roads, large-scale deforestation, pollution, contamination and sedimentation of waterways, soil erosion and disturbance of native peoples and wildlife.

- LATIN AMERICA has:**
- 16% of the global land surface
 - 8% of human population
 - 27% of mammal species
 - 37% of reptile species
 - 43% of known bird species
 - 47% of known amphibians
 - 34% of flowering plants
 - 59% of tropical rain forests

Latin America's population:
density of people per 1,000 hectares (2.47 acres)

Latin America	197
Europe	1,086
Asia	1,229

Growth of extraction industries in Latin America:

METALS (spending on exploration)

1991:	\$200 million
1997:	\$1,170 million

TIMBER (exports in cubic meters)

1990:	1.4 million
1996:	3 million

OIL/GAS (production in barrels per day)

1990:	4.5 million
1996:	6.1 million

Exploration for oil, particularly in Colombia, has resulted in the largest find in the Western Hemisphere in 20 years.

■ The hemisphere's largest gas field, in southeastern Peru, is expected to yield up to 11 trillion cubic feet of gas.

1000
MILES
EQUIDISTANT PROJECTION

KEY

- Oil and gas exploration and development sites
- Mining exploration and development sites
- △ Timber concessions (proposed and existing)
- Major tropical wilderness areas
- Threatened biodiversity hot spots

SOURCES:
Conservation
International,
Worldwatch
Institute

RESEARCH BY DITA SMITH, GRAPHIC BY RICHARD FURHO—THE WASHINGTON POST

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Executive Summary

The following mid-term evaluation reviews implementation of the Parks in Peril Program (PiP), focusing particularly on events and actions that have occurred since the previous evaluation undertaken in early 1994. The PiP Program is implemented under a four-year cooperative agreement entered into in 1995 between The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The objective of the program is to protect approximately 30 selected parks and protected areas in USAID's Latin America and Caribbean Region (LAC) that are key sites for conserving biological diversity in this hemisphere.

It is the task of the evaluation team to synthesize the sum of their observations. At the heart of that process lie a few simple questions: Was the project well designed? Was it well implemented? Did it achieve most of its objectives? Is it deserving of continued support? To all these questions, the team's response is yes. We are further tempted to summarize by saying, "good program ... good people ... some weaknesses ... fixable." That may be the bottom line, but it is important that the evaluation team share with the reader how we arrived at such a conclusion.

Although program implementation is now in its eighth year, the urgency and the importance of the program both remain fresh. Many negative factors and conditions that led to the initial program are still very much present. Recent newspaper accounts report that the World Conservation Union (IUCN) biologists remain alarmed by the threats to humanity posed by continuing losses of biodiversity, ranging from 5 to 12 percent of all species known. The numbers may be debatable, but the trend is not. This scientific urgency is heightened by the combination of pressures posed by population increases, rural poverty, and continued high rates of resource extraction in countries where PiP Program sites are located (see map, p. vi).

Weighed against this are the many positive, countervailing changes that have occurred within the region during the eight years of the PiP Program. Environmental awareness is on the rise, and most governments are devoting more resources to environmentally relevant activities. Conservation remains very much favored by a broad public, and a region wide mosaic of parks and protected areas has been created, of which the Parks in Peril Program is one of the most significant components. In addition, democratic values are taking hold—nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have not only grown in numbers and competence; they have taken on increasing responsibilities and are demanding a greater say in deciding how and where and for what purpose both public and private resources will be spent. Many NGO partners working with the PiP Program have emerged as among the most important voices in their host countries' dialogues on conservation.

Our report has been prepared with this background in mind. We now offer the reader the following suggestions for navigating its specific information: First, it will prove helpful to read the summary section of the 1994 evaluation, in that way to gain an appreciation for both the distance the PiP Program has come in four years and to notice, perhaps with some concern, that some of the observations we are making strike a familiar chord. Second, read this executive summary in conjunction with chapter 2, Program Overview, and chapter 7, Lessons Learned, to gain a better sense of the strengths and weaknesses of the program and the insights we have garnered that are briefly touched upon here.

The evaluation team finds the program structurally sound, with only one area of any significant conceptual weakness, namely, the lack of a clear relationship between governments and the

program. The cooperative partner, TNC, has gone through a significant learning process to arrive at its present state of implementation proficiency. It appears innovative, open to suggestion and is intellectually rigorous. The most significant lesson the organization has learned is that, unlike its domestic modus operandi, it must engage the communities in and around the park areas where it is working in the business of conservation. It **must** do so if the parks and protected areas are to survive. That means TNC has to be aware of, though not always responsive to, the development issues that those communities, and the individuals living in those communities, are facing. Perhaps the broader lesson is that conservation, like all development issues, is complex, difficult and time-consuming. Fortunately, TNC has the assistance of numerous conservation NGO partners who are familiar with local conditions. For many of the partners their participation in the program has also been a useful learning experience.

In general, staffing capabilities of all customers (TNC, NGO partners, and park administrators) are excellent—individuals are professionally competent, open-minded and uniformly highly motivated. The organizations all appear to work well with each other and with USAID/Washington and its field missions. We encountered no obvious problem areas.

The programmatic elements of PiP include a mixture of strengths and weaknesses, with the former clearly outweighing the latter. In general, we found that the order of the four Intermediate Results corresponded directly to the order of programmatic strengths, that is, on-site park capacity ranked first, NGO capacity ranked second, developing community constituencies ranked third, and obtaining non-USAID funding ranked fourth. TNC has developed several innovative programs that have advanced the art of measuring conservation progress; some additional fine tuning is suggested to improve further on their usefulness.

Lastly, there appear to be internal tugs and pulls within TNC about the policy role it should or can play and the degree of advocacy it is prepared to undertake. On one hand there is some outstanding work being done in areas like financial policy mechanisms and support for the movement from donor-based to market-based financing; on the other hand there are other policy issues, for example, involving career ladders/pay structure for park personnel, where there appears to be some hesitancy in taking on policy issues that could impact on the program or in pushing USAID missions to pursue these issues. As it has in its work with the financial policy mechanisms, we believe there is room and justification for continuing to shift the organization's focus outward and to assert itself more forcefully in those areas where it has a programmatic self-interest. Some reflection on these roles and what they say about the organization's current and future view of itself may be in order.

In our view, program strengths and accomplishments substantially outweigh areas of weakness. We have attempted to identify both, beginning with the principal strengths of the PiP Program.

- * The PiP Program is working well! Over two dozen "paper parks" have been turned into properly functioning protected areas.
- * Well qualified, committed and enthusiastic staff are an enormous asset.
- * TNC is clearly ascending the steep part of the experience curve.
- * Applied learning is a core TNC corporate value.
- * Many TNC activities and tools are very innovative.
- * A network of Latin conservation NGOs has been strengthened.
- * The PiP Program is actively pursuing the move from donor-based to market-based financing.
- * The overall program has successfully leveraged significant other donor funds.

- * Attitudes among many local people appear to have changed from opposition to acceptance of protected areas.
- * PiP Program effectiveness is most evident at the site level.
- * Adaptive approaches to site management fit local circumstances (no cookie cutter management approach here).
- * USAID and TNC are well matched partners.

Principal areas needing further thought or attention are listed below:

- * The role of governments as stakeholders or clients needs strengthening.
- * Financial self-sufficiency for most sites, even consolidated sites, is still elusive.
- * Achieving site consolidation within an three- or four-year time frame is overly ambitious.
- * Don't focus so much TNC/NGO partner attention on **implementing** community participation activities—partner with groups that can do that more effectively. Stay focused on building stakeholder capacity.
- * The objectives behind PiP Program support for community activities are not sufficiently clear.
- * Define more clearly the role of community participation and gender.
- * Local partners and TNC need to target more effectively the hard to reach.
- * The threats analysis process needs to be more dynamic.
- * Don't focus on winning local threats battles and in the process jeopardize the war.
- * The consolidation scorecard is an excellent tool that could use both weighting and site-specific tweaking.
- * There is too little discretionary room in the annual budget to deal with unforeseen events and special circumstances.
- * Institution building doesn't end with one strong NGO partner.
- * TNC should enlist more USAID mission support to further program and policy objectives.

During this intensive period, the team had a unique opportunity to focus exclusively on one activity for six weeks and to reflect collectively on what lessons could be gleaned from all that was observed, read, and discussed. The most trenchant of these insights or lessons learned are presented below. The full list is presented in chapter 7.

- * By using the principles of adaptive management, the PiP Program has been successful in working in a variety of settings and circumstances. It is through this process of adaptation that a general program with standard tools can be custom-fitted to the needs and management situation of individual sites.
- * Governments must be brought in more systematically as active partners in the program. Strategies, specific outcomes, and indicators of success are needed to work most effectively with the agencies legally responsible for the management of the PiP Program sites.
- * A three- or four-year time frame for consolidating sites appears unrealistic, and there is no evidence that a set formula can work in all cases. The decision when to terminate USAID funding must be made on a case by case basis, taking into account the scorecard, and the magnitude of threats, as well as many other determining factors that will vary from site to site.
- * The concepts of graduation and consolidation should apply to partners as well as sites. Over

time, the relationship between TNC and its partners should grow from mutual dependency, related to specific goals, to mutual support for larger programs within coalitions.

- * Success in the policy arena requires operational cooperation between USAID, TNC, partners, and coalitions. In-country TNC coordinators seem critical in organizing and managing such efforts.
- * Financial planning for the long-term management of a site is essential and should be started from the beginning of project activities. Basic protection and basic finance need to be seen as being inseparable elements of PiP site management. It is of no use to start one without paying close attention to the other.
- * Income generating activities for communities, partners, or sites need to be treated as businesses and managed accordingly. It is unrealistic to expect community members, local partner organizations, and on-site managers to be able to develop in short periods of time the business skills necessary to manage businesses successfully, particularly while carrying out their other duties at the same time.
- * Working with communities has changed their attitudes, often dramatically, toward the protected area. Implementation of a good neighbor policy, and demonstrated interest for the well-being of the neighbor has proven to be effective in gaining their support.
- * Because conservation is a social process, TNC must be very clear about its role and its methods with respect to surrounding communities. This clarity is needed so that TNC continues to focus on its core strengths, reaches out to partners who have complementary strengths, and finds creative ways to attract financing from social development funds for community work.
- * A clear distinction is needed between activities aimed at community relations, community awareness, and development of alternative resource uses through economic activities. In each case, different interventions and strategies will be needed. To engage communities in conservation and fully to utilize their knowledge of natural resources, special efforts must be made to connect with hard to reach, particularly women and indigenous groups.
- * Strategies for developing urban constituencies for the PiP Program sites are important, and in some cases, as important as working with local communities. In most countries the urban constituencies tend to have more political clout than rural communities. Thus, they can be key players in lobbying for the support of legal or policy changes needed to reduce threats to PiP Program sites.
- * Care needs to be taken so that tools such as threat analysis, gender analysis, partner NGOs, REA's, the scorecard, and income-generating activities do not become ends in themselves. Leadership, common sense, and creativity are essential to assure that the management situation is understood in all of its complexity and that realistic objectives for management are set and achieved.
- * Avoid over programming of budgets so that unexpected events, such as natural disasters, changes in personnel, or new complications, can be accommodated without putting at risk overall management.

The body of the evaluation report contains numerous recommendations, although not of equal weight or significance. Those eight that we believe are on the 'A' list are set forth below.

Recommendation #1. That any project extension include an additional intermediate result which seeks to enhance the capacity and increase the involvement of the government agency(s) legally responsible for site management, through strategies to influence policy, stimulate cooperation in the PiP Program, and provide support for that agency. Emphasize assistance in developing co-management regimes, training key personnel and strengthening capacity for strategic planning and management.

Recommendation #2. Give added attention to national or regional policy issues that pose significant threats or opportunities to management of PiP Program sites. Strategies are needed to deal with the specific issues which manifest themselves at those sites. General indicators of success are not likely to apply to every situation, so specific indicators for each issue will need to be developed and monitored.

Recommendation #3. Create a critical threats group, including USAID (Washington and missions), TNC and relevant NGOs, to determine an appropriate plan of action for each site facing a major crisis. The group will need to address possible actions or interventions at the national or international level, identify and seek support from potential allies, and mount a national and/or international campaign, as appropriate.

Recommendation #4. That no approval be given to initiating work on any new PiP Program site unless the objective of achieving financial sustainability is addressed from the outset, and that TNC is prepared to assist the site(s) in working towards resolving funding issues until such time as Indicator Benchmark '4' is achieved, that is, "Long-term financial plan completed; recurrent and/or sustainable sources and mechanisms being implemented to cover basic reserve management costs."
(*Consolidation Scorecard*)

Recommendation #5. USAID should support fully and encourage additional TNC working the area of new conservation funding mechanisms. The potential paybacks are enormous and may eventually enable protected areas to use their own services and products as a key revenue source, permitting them to meet their own expenses.

Recommendation #6. That TNC undertake an analysis of its work on community conservation that includes: taking stock of its past and present work and identifying programmatic strengths and weaknesses; defining its target audiences and assessing whether appropriate strategies are in place to respond to different community sub-groups; examining the organizational structure in Washington and in the field to see whether improvements are needed; examining whether the lessons TNC is learning in this area are being successfully passed on to its partners; examining the role and function of learning centers and the learning process; and reviewing and revising the conceptual framework under which community conservation activities are currently being carried out.

Recommendation #7. That USAID urge TNC to consider modifying its vision of partnering, mixing depth and breadth of relationships. Specifically, TNC could continue its work with some subgroup of NGOs on a long-term organizational basis. Other NGOs would be partnered with a shorter time frame in mind, gradually devolving to less frequent, less intensive, and more carefully targeted contacts. This would enable a larger cross-section of host country conservation NGOs to obtain at least some experience working with an experienced and innovative U.S. partner.

Recommendation #8. That TNC and USAID consider a pause in the development of a new proposal, using the time to increase efforts to harvest lessons learned, set in motion a broadly participatory process to design the next phase of the program, and focus on attracting new donors as partners to enable the program to undertake the expanded tasks envisioned in this report. We believe that USAID, as the primary financier, is best prepared to take the lead in seeking expressions of interest from public and private donors.

In looking toward the future, the evaluation team is unanimous in its support of a follow-on PiP Program. Our reasoning is severalfold. First, threats to the LAC region's biological diversity over the past decade have, if anything, become more acute. Second, the response of governments in the region to those threats has tended to be slow and/or uneven. Third, the PiP Program is a winner and has amply demonstrated how working through local stakeholders can effectively accomplish the objective of protecting threatened areas. The team's suggestions for how such a program might be structured are set forth in chapter 8, and we encourage readers to consider the programmatic and tactical suggestions offered..

Chapter 1

Introduction and Background

Introduction

This mid-term evaluation reviews progress under the Parks in Peril (PiP) Program, a cooperative agreement between The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The evaluation was conducted for USAID during the period January–May 1998; it included field visits to seven protected areas in Mexico, Central America, and South America and discussions with headquarters staff at USAID and TNC in Washington, D.C.

The evaluation team consists of (a) Laurence Hausman, team leader, institutional relationships and strengthening, Tropical Research and Development, Inc.; (b) Allen Putney, management of protected areas, Tropical Research and Development, Inc.; (c) Mary Hill Rojas, community development, participation and gender, WIDTECH, Development Alternatives, Inc.; (d) Lorenzo Rosenzweig, conservation finance, Tropical Research and Development, Inc., and executive director of the Mexican Fund for the Conservation of Nature.

The team began its work in meetings with USAID and TNC personnel in Washington from 26 to 30 January 1998. From 31 January to 13 February the team visited three PiP Program sites in Mexico (La Encrucijada, El Ocote, and Sian Ka'an). From 15 March to 4 April the team visited sites in Ecuador (Machalilla), Peru (Bahuaja Sonene), Costa Rica (Talamanca), and Guatemala (Sierra de Las Minas). Following visits to these individual sites, the team held debriefing sessions for the USAID missions and The Nature Conservancy field staff in each country. On 13 April the team held a debriefing for USAID and TNC staff in Washington. This information is discussed more fully in appendix B, Work Plan.

The Statement of Work asked the team “to assess the overall performance of PiP against the program's purpose and results outlined in the Results Framework.” The strategic objective (SO) of the program is the “protection of selected LAC parks and reserves important to conserve the hemisphere's biological diversity.” Linked to the strategic objective are four intermediate results (IRs):

- IR#1, Strengthened on-site capacity for long-term protection of targeted parks and reserves;
- IR#2, Strengthened capacity of targeted NGOs for sustainable management of targeted parks and reserves;
- IR#3, Community constituency developed to support sustainable management of targeted parks and reserves;
- IR#4, Non-USAID funding sources obtained or created for targeted parks and reserves.

Following discussion of each of the above, the team addressed three other themes: (a) the consolidation of sites, (b) the management structure of PiP, and (c) the balancing themes program. These presentations were followed by discussions of lessons learned and a suggestion about the future of the

program. In addition to the standard appendices, the team included a summary of site-specific observations.

It should be noted that team members were careful to point out at each site that the purpose of their visit was not to evaluate the individual sites but to evaluate the overall Parks in Peril Program. Observations during particular site visits were used as examples illustrating broader issues.

The team found it a wholeheartedly delightful and stimulating challenge to examine this program, the flagship conservation program for USAID's Latin America and Caribbean Bureau and one of the most significant conservation efforts of the United States foreign aid program. We team members wish to express our deep appreciation to The Nature Conservancy staff, TNC's partner NGOs and friends, the protected areas personnel, the numerous (and hospitable) local communities, and the staff from USAID/ Washington and the field missions for doing an excellent job of facilitating our work in Washington D.C., Mexico, Ecuador, Peru, Costa Rica, and Guatemala. We are thankful to them for being gracious hosts, for speaking candidly with us about the program's successes and frustrations, and for helping us make the best of a demanding assignment. The enthusiasm, dedication, knowledge, and creativity of persons in all those positions are of the highest caliber and did much to keep our own spirits high.

Background

The Parks in Peril Program was developed to conserve imperiled ecosystems in Latin America and the Caribbean by "ensuring on-site management of officially designated protected areas containing globally important biological diversity." Parks in Peril is a term used by The Nature Conservancy for some fifty- five-plus conservation sites in Latin America and the Caribbean. The United States Agency for International Development has thus far provided funding for twenty-eight of these sites, with plans for adding new sites in the near future. For purposes of this evaluation, the twenty-eight sites enjoying USAID funding are referred to throughout as the PiP Program. A description of how the program works is included in appendix A, Scope of Work (pp. A3-4).

The PiP Program was first authorized in FY 1990, and its work was begun in 1991. A first external evaluation, which was undertaken in 1994, advocated an extension of the original program. That led to an unsolicited proposal by TNC, which resulted in a new \$20.5 million cooperative agreement between USAID and TNC that was signed in September 1995. The new agreement added additional elements to the program and extended its life through the end of FY 99, approximately eighteen months from the date of this report. Currently, the total estimated contribution from USAID is \$33.7 million; this is to be matched by contributions from TNC of almost \$9 million.

With the support of USAID Washington and the USAID missions in each country, The Nature Conservancy works with one or more partners, host country nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), in each site. At the sites visited by the evaluation team these Nature Conservancy partners were

La Encrucijada, Mexico: Instituto de Historia Natural de Chiapas;
El Ocote, Mexico: Instituto de Historia Natural de Chiapas;
Sian Ka'an, Mexico: Amigos de Sian Ka'an;
Machalilla, Ecuador: Fundación Natura and The Conservation Data Center;
Bahuaja Sonene, Peru: Pro Naturaleza;
Talamanca-Caribbean Biological Corridor, Costa Rica: Talamanca Caribbean Biological Corridor

Commission; and,
Sierra de las Minas, Guatemala: Defensores de la Naturaleza.

All these partners in turn work with other local NGOs, and one partner, the Talamanca Corridor Commission, is a confederation of fourteen local, grassroots, organizations. The seven sites contain very diverse environments, ranging from coastal reserves to tropical forests and savannas to mountain forests.

Such organizational and physical diversity demands adaptive management and flexibility. The Nature Conservancy has provided this flexibility by defining its role as one of supporting and facilitating the work of its partners rather than directing that work itself.

That some concerns have become moot and that others show significant improvement are the result of The Nature Conservancy making the appropriate course corrections and gaining additional implementation experience. For example, "the lack of a management system at TNC capable of adequately dealing with PiP" (p. ii, 1994 evaluation), which resulted in inferior reporting, has been smartly turned around. The difference in quality of the reports then and now is striking. The introduction of the scorecard has also made an order of magnitude change in how well USAID and others are able to track progress at individual parks, even though we do recommend changes in how that tool is used. The concern about excessive decentralization has been modified, both through more effective internal checks and balances and by the introduction of a separate Balancing Themes activity, which (not surprisingly) has created its own set of organizational tensions.

We believe the earlier concern that USAID should find ways to increase its participation in substantive management of PiP (p. iii, 1994 evaluation) is at odds with the basic premise underlying a cooperative agreement. TNC is not a contractor, and in our opinion USAID provides good oversight and participates appropriately at key strategic and tactical decision points.

We found the observations of four years ago (p. iii, 1994 evaluation) about the need for TNC to play a more activist role in its partnerships with local NGOs much less pertinent today. It is probable TNC made greater efforts in this direction (although we weren't able to confirm that). It is equally probable that partner NGOs gained additional experience and know-how. What we can say is that there have been greater exchanges resulting from workshops and the annual Conservation Week meetings as well as a significant increase in the flow of technical information—primarily from TNC to its partners but increasingly from partners back to TNC. In addition, TNC has hired several Latino country directors who previously worked with conservation NGOs in the countries in which they are now based; the insights they bring to TNC and the expertise they are returning to their countries have substantially benefited all parties.

Other comments made in the previous evaluation remain eerily on target:

PiP is supported by three conceptual pillars: park protection, community participation, and long-term financing. TNC is succeeding admirably in accomplishing the first, is experiencing some dramatic successes—as well as notable lapses—in the second, and has had relatively few successes in the third arena. (P. iii, 1994 evaluation)

Time has passed, but we continue to agree nonetheless. For the most part, park protection has gone swimmingly. And the 1998 evaluation team believes the intensive efforts of TNC and its partners to focus energies on increasing community involvement and to "get this right" have borne much fruit.

What remains is clarifying the conceptual role of community participation: how the program's experiences to date can be brought together, analyzed, and developed into a framework for most effectively reaching different community groups, either by TNC and its partners or by working with other groups.

The weakness in long-term financing, the third of these pillars, has stubbornly persisted, even though, ironically, it is an area of strength for the The Nature Conservancy. It isn't clear why. Attention appears focused on financial plans rather than actually securing additional funds. With two exceptions, for example, none of the seven sites we visited could be termed "financially self-sustaining." And without sufficient funding there's a good chance that even parks that have left the intensive phase of USAID funding may fail. TNC is aware of this shortcoming and is currently making it a major focus, a belated but nonetheless vital course correction. We believe strongly that TNC and USAID need to revisit certain consolidated sites to correct that critical flaw. And no work should be initiated on new sites unless securing long-term financing is made a priority from the outset.

The last area of concern relates to the negative impact of policies, specifically:

... many of the parks face threats that are the result of policy and the way it is implemented. Protection, community development, and long-term financing can all be affected by different policies that in turn will affect the viability of the protected area's resources. Thus, PiP must develop mechanisms to address policy issues in future implementation. (P. iv, 1994 evaluation)

Although an innovative tool (threats assessment) and a methodology (community participation) were developed to identify perceived threats, the threats themselves have tended to be site-specific. But as was clear from the example at La Encrucijada (Chiapas, Mexico), the overriding threat to the park is coming from policy decisions taken at the state and federal levels. Despite valiant local NGO and TNC efforts to change those policies, they have thus far been unsuccessful. Perhaps a new mechanism needs to be in place for responding to such threats. This report suggests one option, discussed in chapter 5, Program Management. Because it is likely that other policy-related threats exist, attention must be given to developing a suitable response mechanism to avoid jeopardizing gains made by the program.

Chapter 2

Program Overview— Principal Strengths and Weaknesses

Throughout the course of this evaluation, the team returned repeatedly to two basic yet deceptively simple questions posed by the USAID's LAC/RSD/E staff: first, has the PiP Program been successful in its work toward achieving the office's strategic objective?

To judge the "success" of a project and to determine whether any partner is "good" are complex, essentially subjective processes. At the heart of those processes, however, lie a few simple questions: Was the project well designed? Was it well implemented? Did it achieve some or most of its objectives? Is it deserving of continued support? To all these questions the team's response is yes.

Is the PiP Program an unqualified success? No. Should future support be simply granted to an extension of the current program? No. In both regards the team identified areas of weakness. Nevertheless, it is the judgment of the team that the program's principal strengths generally outweigh by far the areas identified as needing improvement.

Strengths

1. The program is working well! The objective of turning a series of "paper parks" into functioning, well-managed PiP Program sites is being accomplished in a dozen countries throughout the Latin America/Caribbean region.
2. Well qualified, committed and enthusiastic staff are an enormous program asset. The leadership within TNC, within its partners, and among park administrators and staff is, with very few exceptions, of uniformly high quality. The individuals associated with this program appear knowledgeable, dedicated, and highly motivated. Because they are key to the program's continued success when USAID funding ends, these human resources must be encouraged, protected, supported, and rewarded by their respective organizations.
3. TNC is clearly ascending the steep part of the experience curve. What began as a simple organizational objective during the program's early years—to protect important areas of biodiversity—has progressively evolved. Today there is far greater institutional appreciation of the complex development issues facing all conservation efforts. TNC's maturation process has critically included its increasing recognition of three such issues: that parks and protected areas cannot flourish without a workable accommodation regarding sustainable resource use involving the surrounding communities, that those communities function within a regional political and economic context, and that their political and economic contexts are part of a national framework.
4. Applied learning is a core TNC corporate value. To incorporate lessons learned into an organization's operational methodology is a difficult task—and TNC appears to be doing just that. It is transforming its view of the world of conservation from the roughshod "bucks for acres" style to adaptive management methods, learned from its experience in Latin America, that support close contacts with communities. It is a change from "we can save" to "we need to work together to save." TNC's adapting those lessons to

its domestic program and making those changes within a relatively short time is an impressive accomplishment.

5. Many TNC activities and tools are innovative. The Rapid Ecological Assessment, the consolidation scorecard, the threats assessment, and environmental funding mechanisms (debt swaps, national environmental funds, ecotourism, carbon sequestration "swaps," water use fees) are excellent examples. The team members believe USAID is associating itself with and supporting an innovative, forward-looking partner.

6. A network of Latin conservation NGOs has been strengthened. TNC has chosen well-regarded NGO partners in each of the countries the team visited, and, over a period of years, has focused that assistance in a few key areas: institutional capacity building (both NGO staffs and boards of directors), fund raising (in the U.S. and overseas), and, recently, innovative financial policy formulation.

7. The PiP Program is facilitating the move from donor-based toward market-based financing. The direction of the thinking and the nature of the funding mechanisms that are being pursued under this program will facilitate changes in the source of future funding from donors to market instruments. Enabling sites eventually to use their own services and products as a key revenue source, to "pay their own way" as it were, is an exciting direction that the evaluation team heartily endorses.

8. The overall program has successfully leveraged significant other donor funds. During the 1991-98 period, TNC and its partners have attracted over \$44 million from a range of primarily public but also private donors to support various elements of the PiP program. This is in addition to TNC's own fund-raising efforts (over \$2 million since 1995) through its "Adopt an Acre" program.

9. The in-country presence of TNC's country directors facilitates access to the policy arena. As issues involving individual sites and broader conservation policies and practices assume greater importance in TNC's country operations, the abilities of senior TNC staff to understand their context and to deal most effectively with relevant policy "players" appear to be enhanced.

10. Attitudes among many local people appear to have changed from opposition to acceptance of protected areas. The program's awareness activities among the communities the team visited have contributed to a growing appreciation of the importance of conserving local biodiversity resources. However, opposition from the disaffected and economically disadvantaged remains.

11. The PiP Program appears most effective working at the site level. Whether it is promoting changes in attitude about conservation among shareholders living next to or within the protected area, using collaborative processes to build local coalitions, or strengthening the capacity of park managers and guards, the area of greatest effectiveness for both TNC and most of its partners appears to be site-specific work. The closer to the site, the more that collaboration exists.

12. Adaptive approaches to site management fit local conditions. TNC has shown an admirable willingness to experiment with a variety of site management approaches. Notable are the substantially different approaches taken in Talamanca (Costa Rica), Sierra de las Minas (Guatemala), and La Encrucijada (Mexico). This flexibility and willingness to respond to the needs of the individual site is a mark of the most successful organizations.

13. Well-matched partners. The team believes that USAID and TNC are well-matched partners. They seem to be working toward a shared vision that both seem comfortable with. Relations between the two

have evolved steadily and appear very healthy. Communications are close and cordial, with helpful, reciprocal feedback. From the evaluation team's perspective, USAID has supported an attractive concept that has evolved into a good program. It has done so with admirable consistency of both direction and funding.

Weaknesses and Areas of Concern

1. The role of governments as stakeholders or clients needs strengthening. Team members noted at several sites that insufficient attention was devoted to carving out clear roles for government or seeking to harmonize the objectives of the program with those of the government. Except in limited circumstances, the protected areas system must necessarily involve either the national or the local government (or often both) in matters of oversight, legal status, funding, protection, and public constituency. Making that relationship more explicit would increase the likelihood of achieving the program's goal and objectives.

2. Financial self-sufficiency for most sites, even consolidated sites, is still elusive. It is ironic that the area that is probably TNC's greatest strength, fundraising/financial sustainability, should be the area that is weakest at the sites the team visited. Although attracting non-USAID funding to the program has been a very good achievement, the ability to plan for and garner sustainable financing for those parks the team visited has not succeeded as well. Of the seven sites visited, only two were close to being financially self-sustaining (and at one of those TNC's efforts had not been significant). Even at parks about to be consolidated, financial planning has been given inadequate attention.

3. Achieving site consolidation within a three- or four-year time frame is overly ambitious. While it may be feasible to attain acceptable consolidation scores in IRs #1 (strengthened on-site capacity) and #2 (strengthened NGO capacity) within that period, it strikes us as most unrealistic to expect that benchmark scores of '4' are achievable in the areas of community constituency (IR#3) and attainment of adequate non-USAID funding sources (IR#4) within the same time frame. The only exceptions we see would be situations in which PiP Program funding is provided to protected areas that have already achieved significant funding from other sources.

4. Stay focused on what TNC does best: build *stakeholder capacity* to design and implement the interventions necessary for successful conservation. It is not efficient to focus so much of TNC and conservation partners' attention on implementing community participation activities. Partner with other public and private organizations that can do that more effectively (see below) and work to integrate those efforts into the rest of the program. Devote more attention to other PiP program elements: site conservation, buffer zone management, national policy improvement, urban constituency development, institutional development, and NGO and park financial self sufficiency.

5. The objectives behind PiP program support for community activities are not sufficiently clear. There is a need to separate activities with income generating objectives from those that are focused on community development/good will/public relations. Both have a role, but both need to be considered and implemented differently. In both instances, local conservation NGOs and TNC need to partner with other organizations having greater subject expertise. This would free them to focus their energies and staff on building the capacity of other local stakeholders to design and implement the interventions necessary for successful conservation.

* Income producing activities need to respond to the strategic questions: **for whom** (Neighboring communities? The protected area? The local NGO partner?), **by whom** (Fee-based operator? A business? Community members?), and for what purpose (To reduce pressure on the park's

natural resources? To provide revenues to the park? To support NGOs?). These “productive enterprises” are, in fact, small businesses (generally high-risk enterprises) and should be so referred to and dealt with. As such, business training, marketing and credit decisions should be based on sound business principles. Implementation should be left to qualified experts, either employed by the NGO/TNC or, preferably, administered by local organizations having such expertise.

* Community development projects may also have a role to play, since working with communities on a common agenda is critical to the long-term success of protected areas. Although there may be some overlap with income producing activities, their objectives are generally different. Strategic thinking is needed to determine how best to link these activities with the management of the parks, reducing threats, and the conservation objectives of the program. Partnering with organizations having experience dealing with community development-type issues would be a logical next step.

6. The conceptual role of gender and community participation needs to be clarified and the experiences to date brought together and analyzed to improve the understanding of how gender relates to conservation. This information should be used to develop a gender strategy in line with relevant USAID policies and to define gender training and leadership needs. TNC is currently filling its senior community conservation position; that individual can take the lead in defining a new framework, using several useful papers from the field in the process.

7. Linked to the above, local partners and TNC need to target more effectively the “hard to reach,” women, indigenous and older adolescents, and involve them more fully in conservation issues. Activities already exist to provide environmental education to schoolchildren and to work with largely make community groups. Despite some excellent examples to the contrary (Mexico, Costa Rica, Peru) the same is not equally true for the “hard to reach.” Since each group has different requirements, practices and knowledge of natural resources, they require different strategies to bring them each more directly into the program. The experience of other NGOs who have good track records working with these groups needs to be tapped far more extensively.

8. Threats analyses need to be more dynamic. The tool itself is very useful and innovative. Yet it can be more effectively applied. Threats are generally dynamic and prone to change although how the tool is used makes them appear static. Using the tool more frequently would increase its utility. In fact, it may be useful to view threats analysis as a *process* rather than an outcome, one that focuses on how best to *manage threats*. The team also suggests simultaneously analyzing each threat thoroughly enough to perceive the opportunities it creates and to identify management objectives that not only neutralize threats, but maximize associated opportunities as well (e.g. Debt for Nature swaps, the Mobil drilling concession in the reserve zone of Bahuaja Sonene National Park, Peru).

9. Don't focus on the local threats battle and jeopardize the war. In general, threats analysis tends to focus on site-based issues even though some very significant threats have little to do with the site itself (e.g., removal of a kerosene subsidy may encourage greater logging) or are of such magnitude that the resources available locally are insufficient to mitigate the threat (e.g., a National Water Commission-World Bank irrigation project in Chiapas causing very rapid siltation of the waterways at La Encrucijada National Park, Mexico). Such threats need to be given different and special attention, primarily at the national level. In some cases, TNC and its partners are waging a battle (thus far unsuccessfully in La Encrucijada) to avert or reverse national policies or regional resource use patterns. However, in other instances (park personnel career paths/salary structure in Ecuador and Peru), more needs to be done to

engage USAID missions and other organizations that may have an interest in challenging the policies.

10. The consolidation scorecard is an excellent tool that could use site-specific tweaking. Currently, the scorecard is used across all sites to demonstrate progress toward achieving consolidation criteria. The team offers several suggestions for how the scorecard could be customized, using the same indicators but assigning them different weights or rankings. This would provide a more accurate picture of the specific circumstances facing each site as it moves toward consolidation.

11. There appears to be too little discretionary room in the annual budget to deal with unforeseen events and special cases. Such constraints appear to face Machalilla (Ecuador) and Talamanca (Costa Rica). Both may receive their last major funding this year, and neither is positioned to absorb the financial after shock. The impact of El Niño at Machalilla (destroying substantial amounts of infrastructure) has created unanticipated funding requirements; in Costa Rica the brief window of funding for Talamanca is insufficient to determine the outcome of a unique experiment. Given the observation made in number 2 above, some mechanism for revisiting selected "consolidated" sites needs to be found to provide bridging funds until more secure sources of long-term support can be identified. Such funds are needed to prevent what were once "paper parks" from turning into "papier-mache parks," that is, parks whose structure will fall apart if basic funding fails.

12. Institution building doesn't end with one strong NGO partner. Institutional strengthening is a critical component of the program, and at some sites there are several participating NGO partners. Yet in others TNC has chosen to remain closely linked with a single partner even while there is an urgent need to expand the pool of NGOs to carry out the broader conservation agenda within a country. TNC should consider increasing the number of partners as well as urging its larger, urban-based NGO partners to reach out to work more with other local partners that have complementary skills and expertise (see number 5 above).

13. TNC should enlist more USAID Mission support to further program and policy objectives. The evaluation team members believe that TNC could make better use of its contacts with USAID mission management to enlist the latter's help, either alone or in consort with other donors, in pursuing conservation issues that are impacting protected areas negatively.

Chapter 3

Discussion of Intermediate Results

This chapter is written against the four Intermediate Results set forth in the PiP Program Strategic Framework. The framework itself is included as appendix C (p. A13).

A. IR#1 Strengthened On-Site Park Capacity

This Intermediate Result is aimed at strengthening on-site capacity for long-term protection of target parks and reserves. It is the objective most consistently met by the program, and basic protection of most sites has been achieved in a remarkably short time. This truly significant achievement occupies relatively insignificant space in the report. Long-term management goals as defined in the consolidation scorecard have been met less consistently at the seven sites visited, but they have apparently still been achieved effectively in many other sites.

General Observations

It seems ironic that the government agency legally responsible for the management of each of the PiP Program sites is not formally recognized in the project document as a *stakeholder* or *client*. This appears to be more a question of project design than implementation. Certainly the project would benefit from a clearly articulated strategy for relating to, cooperating with, influencing, and supporting the government agency responsible for management of the protected area. While this element is absent from the project design, it has, in many sites, been a concern and a focus of implementation activity for USAID, TNC, and/or the partner NGO. A recommendation to this effect is included in chapter 5.

Effective management of protected areas requires experienced and well-trained personnel at all levels. The program has in general done well in supporting training activities through site-level budgets, production of training materials, the annual TNC Conservation Week, and increasingly, the identification and dissemination of lessons learned. However, in many instances this experience and training is in danger of being lost because of an unstable personnel situation at the LAC governments level usually caused by nonexistent career paths and/or low salaries. In most cases this instability arises from the administrative procedures and personnel policies of the government agency responsible for protected areas. We note that government policies are often difficult to modify or influence, and collaborative strategies are often needed to effect changes.

Recommendation: Where needed, develop strategies that can focus the influence and support of USAID, TNC, partner organizations, and other stakeholders to assist government agencies legally responsible for protected areas to implement policies that will encourage the development of competitive, long-term careers for qualified protected area personnel.

Basic Protection

As defined by the PiP Program consolidation scorecard, basic protection includes physical infrastructure, on-site personnel, training, land tenure issues, threats analysis, and official declaration of protected area status. This has been largely accomplished in the sites visited. Basic facilities, trans-

portation, field equipment, and communications systems are in place and being used well. Park directors, park guards, and personnel from partner organizations are for the most part well qualified, well trained, and dedicated to their work. In general, land tenure issues and threats are clearly identified, and official declaration of the areas has taken place.

While the basic protection of the PiP Program sites has proven to be the most successful aspect of the project, it is also the most sensitive to financial considerations. The protection of these sites can deteriorate rapidly if financial support is withdrawn. This underlines the importance of financial sustainability as a critical precondition for long-term success.

The basic tools for management introduced by TNC, such as threats analysis, studies of land tenure, monitoring plans, long-term financial planning, and PiP Program operational plans, appear to be in regular use by staff at most sites. In many instances, however, monitoring plans and long-term financial planning were deficient.

The consolidation scorecard, on the other hand, does not seem to be widely used in the field, except in the case of the two Chiapas sites (La Encrucijada and El Ocote), where they are used as management tools. This is perhaps logical because the scorecard is most useful as a tool for outsiders to gauge progress and to compare progress across several sites. On-site managers usually have a much more detailed understanding of the complex management issues relating to the site than are reflected in the scorecard.

It was noted at several sites that managers were relatively less prepared to deal effectively and creatively with the management of recreation (day use by people from the region) and ecotourism (overnight use by people coming from outside the region). In many sites, there was little concern that most government-owned protected areas should, as a matter of principle, be accessible to the public; nor was there full appreciation of the potential support that could be generated by urban constituencies' awareness of the importance and value of protected areas. These relative weaknesses appear to be due to site managers' lack of training and experience as well as lack of TNC technical assistance.

Recommendation: That TNC and its partners develop a program of technical assistance and training for site managers in recreation and ecotourism management.

One aspect of the consolidation scorecard relating to basic protection that perhaps needs further consideration is threats analysis. While threats analysis is a useful tool in understanding basic management requirements (demand), it needs to be complemented by an analysis of opportunities (supply). The exercise for identifying opportunities is similar to that for identifying threats. The first exercise is to look out over the horizon and ask what is out there that could help achieve the management objectives. Is there a possibility of strategic alliances with other groups? Which key decision-makers do we know, or which are sympathetic to our objectives? How can we cultivate their support? If we built a guest house in the park, could we invite key decision-makers and their families to the park and through this establish personal relationships and enlist their understanding and support? Are there opportunities for recreation and tourism that can create important constituencies for protection of the area? What interest groups could benefit from the protected area and how do we stimulate their active support?

The second exercise is to examine the threats to the area, and see how each can be converted into an opportunity. Debt for Nature Swaps are a classic illustration in which crushing national debt, a

severe threat that could drive desperate governments to sacrifice biodiversity for short-term gains, is seen as an opportunity to both erase debt and put it to use for conservation. The challenge is to analyze each threat thoroughly enough to perceive the opportunity it creates and to identify management objectives that not only neutralize threats but maximize associated opportunities as well. This is not merely a mental game. All good management, regardless of the subject, is built on the foundation of opportunity. It is a proven technique for focusing on the art of the possible—a somersault of the mind from negative to positive, from reaction to proaction, from what constrains us to what moves us forward. It is only by understanding both threats *and* opportunities that the most successful and cost-effective management interventions can be identified.

Recommendation: Refine the guidelines on the use and application of threats analysis to make it a more dynamic response to the changing nature of threats. More frequent application would enhance the tool's effectiveness, and hopefully lead to a view that threats analysis should be viewed as a process to be managed rather than as an outcome. Include systematic analysis of opportunities as well, focusing on how a site might also benefit while responding to a threat.

Long-Term Management

Establishing the conditions for successful long-term management of the PiP Program sites is proving to be more complex than basic protection. For the purposes of the consolidation scorecard, long-term management includes reserve zoning and buffer zone management, management planning, science and information, and monitoring. The sites visited by the evaluation team showed significant differences in terms of success in these long-term management activities. Management planning, in particular, seemed weak at many of the sites. This is significant because good management plans provide the framework for effective conservation action.

There seems to be a conceptual gap regarding long-term management in the PiP Program that has implications for management planning, monitoring, evaluation of success, and finance. Many natural areas are protected so that they provide a stream of goods and services to society that can only be produced, or are best produced, by natural ecosystems unaltered by man.

Maintenance of biological diversity is one such benefit, but it is complemented by many others, the array of which depends on the management category and specific legislation pertaining to each protected area. Some of the most critical nonconsumptive uses are maintenance of essential ecological processes, production of genetic materials and medicinal plants, soil conservation, carbon sequestration, production of potable water and hydro-energy, outdoor recreation, ecotourism, opportunities for spiritual renewal, protection of sacred sites, environmental education and interpretation, and research. Areas managed under multiple-use categories might also permit consumptive uses such as grazing and the harvest of wildlife, timber, medicinal plants, and other natural products. Long-term management of a protected area thus implies a move beyond the simple notion of basic protection into the more complex arena of sustainable use, whether it be consumptive or nonconsumptive.

In the long term, therefore, management plans will have to focus on strategies not only for basic protection, but for sustainable use as well. These uses need to be monitored, and success evaluated in terms of the sustained flow of critical services and products. Perhaps most important of all, as financing of protected areas moves from donor-based to market-based

approaches, protected areas will have to quantify, and charge for, the environmental services performed and the products supplied to the market.

Recommendation: Amend IR#1 to read “strengthen on-site capacity for long-term protection *and management* of targeted parks and reserves.”

Recommendation: Revise the “Site Conservation Planning Manual” to focus on both basic protection and sustainable use as elements of long-term management.

Recommendation: Amend the scorecard to reflect the monitoring, evaluation, and quantification of products and services rendered by the site.

One aspect of program design that seemed relatively deficient in the sites visited was the quality of site planning and facility design. Poor physical planning and design result in less than optimum functionality, increased maintenance costs, detracting from the natural setting, and the loss of opportunities to establish a distinctive style that begins the process of forming “brand loyalty” among the visiting public. “Brand loyalty” in this context is used to mean public identification with, and support for, the protected areas and their resources.

Recommendation: Identify skilled professionals and enlist their assistance in developing quality site plans and design standards for infrastructure to be constructed as part of the PiP Program.

Monitoring efforts at some sites does not yet seem to provide adequate information for measuring success, nor do stakeholders seem generally to be aware of, understand, and use the information. As program evaluation moves from the simpler approaches that measure inputs and processes to more complex approaches that measure outputs and outcomes, more sophisticated monitoring efforts are required.

To measure inputs and processes all that is needed is intermittent assessments of the adequacy of resources and the management processes employed. In using output and outcome approaches, however, indicators are needed to detect changes in the status not only of biological resources but also of cultural resources, socioeconomic aspects of site use, and impacts of the site and its management on local communities as well. TNC/Washington has provided technical assistance by developing techniques such as rapid ecological assessment and evaluation of remote imagery that essentially focus on biological resources. Yet such techniques require highly trained personnel and sophisticated equipment, both of which are usually absent at the site level. In the long run, it is probable that greater value will be found in participatory methods that fully involve site-level stakeholders. Such methods are usually less expensive and more easily applicable at the site level. More importantly, they also allow stakeholders to gain ownership of the process, thereby promoting their knowledge and understanding of, and confidence in, the data that are generated and how the data are used to make management decisions. If stakeholders are to be involved in decision-making, they must have a thorough knowledge of the monitoring process and how it informs.

Recommendation: Give more emphasis to the development and dissemination of participatory approaches to monitoring. They are cost-effective and help build local constituencies.

The previous mid-term evaluation found that the “protection of parks as a result of an integrated

buffer-zone-park values approach is occurring only in a few PiP Program sites.” This did not appear to be the case at the sites visited for this evaluation. Indeed, it seemed at several sites that the emphasis on buffer-zone management was draining time and attention away from important management issues within the park boundaries.

Conclusion

The observations made in this section point to the vibrant success of the PiP Program in achieving basic on-site protection. The success of the longer-term management interventions is less consistent, and questions remain to be resolved regarding the management tools currently in use. Yet the protection of PiP Program sites often depends just as much on responding appropriately to national and regional issues as it does on local issues.

Without doubt, on-site protection must be secured as a first step in management. Evaluating on-site capacity to manage is therefore an essential beginning point. However, in many cases national policy issuer government personnel policies pose significant threats that cannot be dealt with effectively at the site level.

The program has indeed made substantial contributions to changing policies whose effects reach far beyond PiP Program sites. Examples of these broad policy accomplishments include (1) applying the lessons learned in establishing a conservation fund supported by municipal water fees in Quito to planning similar trust funds for conserving parks in Colombia and Bolivia; (2) supporting the restructuring of Paraguay’s public and private reserve system, and (3) working with local NGO partners and providing funding for the initial technical assistance that led to the creation of environmental trust funds in Peru and Colombia. Still, the point remains that many site-specific problems cannot be solved at the site level, and policy-level work—specifically related to the site problem—is required.

Recommendation: Give added attention to national or regional policy issues that pose significant threats or opportunities related to management of the PiP Program sites. Strategies are needed to deal with the specific issues which manifest themselves at the PiP Program sites. General indicators of success will most likely not apply to every situation, so specific indicators for each issue will probably need to be developed and monitored.

B. IR#2 Strengthened Capacity of Partner NGOs for Sustainable Management of Targeted Parks and Reserves

This Intermediate Result focuses on (a) creating an effective organizational structure for the NGOs supporting the management and operations of target parks and reserves and (b) supporting greater NGO participation in the decision-making processes of policies affecting targeted protected areas. With great consistency, this objective is being achieved throughout the region. It is one of several noteworthy strengths of the PiP Program.

TNC-NGO Partnering

One aspect of TNC-NGO partnering deserves special mention at the outset: the professional, low-key nature of the relationships that have been established at six of the seven sites the team visited. Mutual respect and camaraderie were readily evident, whether in the field or at headquarters. The give and take among these healthy, maturing partnerships avoids the pitfalls of dependence and encourages good exchanges of ideas. Such creative synergism is uncommon and

benefits both TNC and its NGO partners. It also bodes extremely well for the future of the PiP Program, whatever form that may take.

The evaluation team attributes many of the program's successes in achieving this Intermediate Result to two positive factors: first, that TNC has done a fine job of selecting its partners, in most cases choosing one of the—or *the*—premier conservation NGO in the country as its principal partner; second, that TNC has worked hard and given much attention to strengthening further those partners' organizational capacities.

With regard to partner selection, two choices come to mind: one is to work with a fledgling organization and strengthen it to the point where it is a fully capable partner (usually a lengthy process); the other is to select a strong, well-regarded organization to begin with and to fine tune its strengths. TNC has generally chosen the latter, and chosen well, which has allowed capacity-building efforts to be targeted on more sophisticated aspects of the NGO's operations.

The downside, also noted in the 1994 evaluation, is that institution building focused on one strong NGO partner "may inhibit full PiP implementation due to the NGO's limited capacity (or interest) to deal with some aspects of the project, particularly community outreach. In those situations where PiP works with more than one NGO, a healthier situation with regard to NGO participation in the conservation field appears to exist" (1994 *Midterm Evaluation of Parks in Peril*, p. 22).

Recommendation: Urge TNC to consider modifying its vision of partnering, mixing depth and breadth of relationships, as discussed in chapter 8, The Future. Specifically, TNC could continue to work with some subgroup of NGOs on a long-term organizational basis, identifying with them fully and viewing their relationship as a marriage of partners. Other NGOs would be partnered with a shorter time frame in mind, gradually devolving to less frequent, less intensive, and more carefully targeted contacts. This would enable a larger cross-section of host country conservation NGOs to gain at least some experience working with an experienced and innovative U.S. partner.

TNC's assistance to its NGO partners appears to be focused in a few key areas: institutional capacity building (both NGO staff and NGO boards of directors), fundraising (in the U.S. and overseas), and assistance with policy formulation. Less effective assistance appears to be occurring in the areas of information dissemination/site marketing and cross-fertilization of experiences among countries/regions.

Highlights of TNC assistance in the area of institutional capacity building focus on training and publications, including frequent visits by TNC professional staff; the annual Conservation Week (a forum for a region wide exchange of technical and organizational information); a Spanish edition of *Rumbo al Exito* (a guide to the roles and responsibilities of NGO boards of directors); *Planificación de Negocios* (a manual on financial sustainability for NGOs, used at the 4th Conservation Week, 1997); and a workshop and training manual, *NGO Self-Sufficiency* (a follow-up to the financial sustainability manual).

In addition to specific training and publications efforts, TNC is strengthening institutional capacities through its work with partner NGOs on innovative management tools: the rapid ecological assessment (REA), the threats assessment, and the scorecard. The team believes these have added scien-

tific rigor to their client's operations.

The evaluation team was pleased to note the extent of TNC's efforts to attract resources to the program. At the same time, however, it was disconcerting to see that financial planning at several of the sites visited by the team was only rudimentary. Although TNC's training efforts in this area have been focused on NGOs, it is possible that the knowledge acquired by the partners is not being passed along appropriately to managers of the protected areas. (The subject is discussed in greater detail under IR#4 below.) Given the critical nature of financial planning, it is important that TNC discover what is and what is not occurring along this training and learning path.

Recommendation: TNC and its partner NGOs must examine whether and how training on financial sustainability matters is being passed along to NGO clients—the protected area directors and staff—and take action urgently to close any educational gaps.

Another area in which TNC has performed a valuable service for its partner NGOs is fundraising in support of the program. In the Central America region alone, TNC's land acquisition program, "Adopt an Acre," has provided over \$2 million for PiP Program sites since January 1995. Additionally during the same period, over \$300,000 has been raised from private sources for ongoing activities.

Perhaps a more important source of long-term funding has come through the actual or planned establishment of trust funds at a number of sites (Sierra de las Minas [Guatemala], Darien [Panama], Noel Kempff [Bolivia], Yanachaga [Peru], and Mbaracayu [Paraguay]). These are all related to debt-for-nature swaps or carbon sequestration programs. They represent an excellent opportunity to create the level of long-term, assured funding that the evaluation team believes is essential to the eventual success of the PiP Program. In addition, by their association with TNC, participating NGOs have gotten extensive exposure both to the techniques and to the sources of such funding, paving the way for their eventual, independent return to the funding table. Although some of this would likely have occurred naturally, there is no gainsaying the role TNC has played in greatly facilitating that process.

The evaluation team applauds the efforts of TNC in the area of conservation policy analysis and formulation, more specifically recent efforts focused on conservation funding mechanisms. TNC has worked creatively with its partner NGOs and thereby strengthened the latter's capacity to engage in policy-level dialogue with host governments and international organizations. The innovative financial mechanisms include debt swaps, national environmental funds, carbon sequestration "swaps," ecotourism, and water use fees. These have the potential to lead to a very significant shift in the source of conservation funds, a shift from donor-based toward market-based instruments.

Recommendation: USAID should support fully and encourage additional work in this area. The potential paybacks are enormous and would eventually enable protected areas to use their own services and products as a key revenue source, to "pay their own way" as it were. This work is taking both TNC and its partners in new and exciting directions and is strongly endorsed by the evaluation team.

Two areas of assistance that appear somewhat less effective are site information dissemination/site marketing and cross-fertilization of experiences among sites/countries/regions.

Effective communication is integral to the long-term success of the PiP Program. The team ob-

served the standard mix of approaches to information dissemination and marketing among the sites, but the degree of effort and level of sophistication varied dramatically from site to site.

Communication activities support PiP Program strategic objectives in the following ways:

- (1) as educational and training tools aimed at local communities and park staff—to relay site-related information and teach site-specific lessons and techniques;
- (2) as marketing/public relations tools directed at outside organizations and the general public, especially those living in nearby urban areas—not only to generate funding but also to raise the profile of the park and build constituencies (visitors and tourists, where appropriate; and,
- (3) as lobbying tools targeted to government officials and other key decision makers as a means of shaping policy and increasing government participation.

A few of the parks already have strong communications programs in place. La Encrucijada has a full-time communications staff whose responsibilities include production of videos and strengthening media relations. Sierra de las Minas (through Defensores) produces impressive videos and digitized presentations. Every site has slide or video presentations of some type, as well as assorted maps, charts, and publications. While several of the sites have accomplished a great deal, all could do more. TNC should work with its partner NGOs (1) to coordinate communications activities among the sites, thus avoiding duplication of effort and taking advantage of economies of scale, (2) to facilitate the pooling and sharing of resources, and (3) to provide communications training to every park upon entry into the program.

Recommendation: That TNC develop a specific strategy for strengthening the communications capacity of its NGO partners (and, through its partners, the protected areas staff) with the objective of increasing the reach and effectiveness of information dissemination and marketing efforts.

Regarding exchange of information, the evaluation team was surprised that informational exchanges by park staff among sites, countries, and regions were not more extensive. Clearly, some sharing occurs at the annual Conservation Week gatherings, although primarily for NGO staff, and TNC generates and presumably widely distributes textual reports on a range of PiP Program experiences at different sites, but discussions with park managers and key staff failed to reveal much evidence of exchange visits to other sites.

Because so much can be gained by seeing how other sites face up to and deal with issues, the team believes greater exchanges of park and NGO personnel would enhance the program. Perhaps this slack will be taken up in part by the Learning Centers program, once it is fully operational, but that cannot substitute fully for actual site visits.

Recommendation: That TNC and USAID find the resources to make on-site exchange visits possible, or examine the trade-offs of substituting funds for on-site visits by key park personnel for some other component of training or information dissemination.

NGO-NGO Partnering

At the various sites visited by the evaluation team there was evidence that TNC and its principal partner NGOs were working well with other NGOs or private-sector groups on specific issues, primarily studies and research. However, only in the case of Talamanca and the Corridor Commission was there a formal relationship involving more than a small handful of other entities.

The number and range of tasks facing each site are substantial, and to accomplish them requires a broad range of human and financial resources. Yet the impression left with the evaluation team at several sites was that the principal NGOs were perhaps stretching themselves thinly across several (sometimes unrelated) fields. Although the principal work of the program is getting done, greater efficiency might involve developing partnerships with other organizations having the expertise to carry out specific parts of the program. This seems especially the case regarding community participation and productive enterprise, where some partners are doing too much on-the-job learning; this is not the best use of scarce human resources. The likelihood of any small NGO having sufficient human resources, funding, and experience to do a good job with community participation, productive enterprise, and conservation is slim.

In the case of community participation and productive enterprises, for example, while TNC and its partner NGO needs to take pains to provide leadership that will guide those efforts, it does not necessarily mean that they need to implement those activities themselves. In some cases that is best accomplished by partnering with another NGO that can bring to bear a greater level of expertise and experience, and possibly funding. Care should be taken to assure that these NGOs share a common conservation objective.

Looking beyond the PiP Program, the conservation/environment agenda in any country is sufficiently ambitious to require the best efforts of *all* interested groups. In fact, the need to expand the pool of NGOs to carry out that agenda is urgent. Fledgling NGOs need to learn from experienced ones, and experienced ones need to reach out and partner with complementary organizations.

Recommendation: That TNC revisit the process of selecting and working with its partner NGOs and develop ways to stimulate greater NGO-NGO contacts as a means of enhancing the efficiency of PiP Program site activities. By maximizing the skills and resources each NGO brings to the conservation/development table the broader program objectives are more likely to be met.

C. IR#3, Community Constituency Developed to Support Sustainable Management of Targeted Parks and Reserves

The PiP Program is in concert with the policy of the first Latin American Congress on National Parks and Other Protected Areas held in Santa Marta, Colombia (1997) which recognizes that conservation is a social issue. Within the PiP Program there is a recognition that engaging communities to foster the conservation of biodiversity and the well-being of the reserves is critical to their long-term viability, especially when hunger and poverty lie close to the reserve boundaries.

The evaluation team recognizes the diversity of stakeholders and the various levels of community—those within the protected area or on its borders, urban constituencies, and the broader regional, national and international communities that support the reserves. Although many of the following observations resulted from field visits primarily with local communities, the team emphasizes the necessity of working with the whole range of stakeholders, especially the policy community, to

address fully the major threats to conservation.

The third Intermediate Result is to develop a community constituency to “support the sustainable management of targeted protected areas” through (a) increased awareness of the importance of the protected areas, (b) increased participation in their management, (c) increased economic benefits from their maintenance.

Increased Awareness of the Importance of the Protected Areas

The evaluation team found that “increasing awareness” seeks to emphasize the importance of the reserves. Awareness activities are aimed at audiences as diverse as policymakers and community leaders to schoolchildren and their teachers. They cover a wide range of activities, from use of the media for conservation messages to economic activities that stress eco-friendly products to training protected area personnel in biology and natural history. Our impression was that awareness activities were generally not well focused.

We recognize that planning how to meet this objective and measuring its success is difficult. The team suggests a structure that emerged from the evaluation that can help guide “awareness” planning, monitoring and evaluation. The structure involves focusing awareness activities in three areas: (a) public relations—those activities that aim to gain the confidence of the communities and bring the park favorable attention, for example, park lookout sites, interpretive centers, “good neighbor” activities such as providing short wave radios or legal advice on environment issues; (b) environmental education—those activities specifically related to teaching and learning, schools and curriculum, and involving both children and adults; and (c) networking—activities that foster coalition building and establish active, strategic networks consisting of communities, reserve personnel, donors, NGOs, and government agencies.

Recommendation: Use the three categories—public relations, environmental education, networking—to guide the planning, monitoring and evaluation of awareness activities and to help strengthen the data used to measure the “proportion of local constituency aware of the importance of local park/reserve site” (Indicator 4.3.1).

Increasing Participation in the Management of the Parks and Reserves

The PIP consolidation scorecard measures the participation of communities in the management of the reserve by their participation in management/technical advisory committees. The evaluation team found that the direct participation of local people in these committees appeared to vary considerably from site to site. At some it was unclear what form this participation took while at others committees were well established. The team found that by their very nature these committees, although nominally inclusive, tended to be exclusive because of limitations on size and purpose; they also appeared to have minimal representation from certain groups, for example, only a few women and almost no youths serve on the committees. It became clear that local committees, while important and useful, alone cannot achieve the broad-based participation in management anticipated in this Intermediate Result.

However, the team observed that communities sometimes play a role in the management of protected areas in other ways. They are occasionally involved in research and community-based monitoring, and at some sites research is returned to the communities for their use and feedback. Reserve personnel also encourage community involvement by using participatory management tools in planning and by holding public forums for dialogue on conservation issues. But more needs to be done to involve communities in the management of the reserves-- for example, utilizing fully the

knowledge of natural resources that local residents have assimilated may help foster a sense of partnership. The best means to involve communities in participation and decision-making is clearly specific to each site and depends a great deal on the skills of the reserve staff and the NGOs they are working with and on the interest and knowledge of local inhabitants. Giving more attention to involving the public in all forms of participatory management would be a realistic next step in strengthening Indicator #4.3.3, "number and proportion of people involved with consultation and decision-making at the site."

Recommendation: Redefine "participation in the management of the reserves" for purposes of planning, monitoring and evaluation to include: (a) community-based participatory research; (b) community-based participatory monitoring; (c) use of participatory management tools; (d) dialogue through public forums; (e) management committees and technical advisory committees.

Recommendation: Return research done in the protected areas to the communities for their use and feedback as one means of involving the communities in the work of the protected areas and keeping them apprized of the knowledge they need for sound decision-making in advising on management of the reserves.

Increasing Economic Benefits from the Maintenance of the Protected Areas

The evaluation detected a lack of clarity about the role of income-producing activities in communities in the vicinity of several of the reserves. It is important to draw a distinction between income producing activities that are a result of careful management of the reserve itself, such as ecotourism, bee-keeping, controlled lobster fishing, and Brazil nut harvesters, and those that are primarily providing alternate sources of income and have no relationship with the maintenance of the reserves, for example, poultry raising and cheese factories. The team found the former to be particularly effective since they clearly established a link with conservation of the protected areas, as targeted in Results Framework Indicator #4.3.2. Both are important in developing constituencies in support of the reserves, yet the priority for PiP Program resources should clearly be the former, especially those activities that make use of resources in a manner compatible with the biodiversity conservation goals of the protected area.

In general, additional strategic thinking is needed to help clarify the role of income generating activities, focusing on the following questions:

- **For whom** (The protected area? The local NGO partner? The adjacent communities?)
- **By whom** (A fee-based operator? A business? Community members?)
- **For what purpose** (To create good will? Reduce pressures on the park's natural resources? Support NGOs?)

As a rule, the team further urges that all income generating activities for communities, partners or sites be treated as businesses and managed accordingly. Small business are generally high risk ventures, with traditionally high failure rates, and many economic activities at the community level are developed with a built-in reliance on continuing NGO support. Without appropriate training, credit and production/marketing advice such efforts are very prone to failure. We suggest they be developed as small businesses responding to legitimate market forces. We also believe it unrealistic to expect community members, local partner organizations, and on-site managers to be able to develop in short periods of time the business skills necessary to manage businesses successfully, particularly

while simultaneously occupied with other duties. Indeed, the team questions whether TNC or its partner NGOs have sufficient entrepreneurial experience to direct such activities.

Recommendation: That economic activities in the communities around sites should be based on sound business principles and not be confused with public relations activities. Before PiP Program funds are used to fund additional economic activities a determination should be made that they (a) be clearly related to biodiversity conservation, (b) have a competitive advantage, (c) are a value-added product, and (d) are market based.

Recommendation: That TNC and/or its partner NGOs either employ experts to provide business training and administer the program or partner with organizations having such expertise and turn over to them that aspect of the program. TNC should also explore the possibility of accessing the funds and expertise of USAID programs working with microenterprises, small businesses and credit.

Cross-Cutting Themes

The evaluation team identified four themes of particular importance that cut across all aspects of the evaluation: collaborative processes, leadership, gender, and reaching those people who are hard to reach.

Collaborative Processes: Overall the team found a clear message that collaborative processes and participatory methods have produced success in changing attitudes among local people from opposition to general acceptance of the protected areas. Such processes have also changed the perspectives of protected area personnel from policing to working with communities in the management of the reserves. The team also heard of successes using participatory methods to frame the dialogue of protected area personnel with policy-makers, government and corporate leaders, and local NGOs. It was also apparent that the reserve directors can play a critical role as participatory facilitators, in pulling together donors and communities in support of the reserve, acting as community ombudsmen and developing good neighbor policies. PIP research dealing with participation, such as the report "Participatory Conservation: Lessons of the PALOMAP Study in Cayambe-Coca Ecological Reserve," should be supported and an emphasis should be given to strengthening the partner NGOs and the reserve personnel in the use of this participatory methodology.

Recommendation: Assure through both formal and informal professional development and training that reserve personnel and NGO partners understand collaborative processes and the participatory methods used to implement them.

Leadership: The leadership model that the team often saw at PiP Program sites was impressive, each player serving as a link to the various scales needed for effective conservation. Certain leadership roles were critical: the role of the partner NGO in linking the sites with the global community and with national policy-makers; the role of TNC as support for their partners, locally, nationally, regionally and internationally; the role of the reserve director as facilitator and ombudsman, linking the reserve to local communities and to urban constituencies; the role of reserve rangers, often people from the site itself, linking the reserve to the communities as natural historians and extension workers; the local people assuring the sustainability of the protected area through their links to their families, communities and the natural resources that surround them. This chain of leadership allows for local experiences to contribute to national policy and to global conservation and it allows for

accessing information and funds at a national and international level in support of the local reserves. Each role is seen as playing a vital part of the whole which seemed to strengthen the sense of collaborative management at the protected areas. This model should be made visible and shared with others.

Gender and the Conservation of Biodiversity: Gender analysis is a useful conservation tool for understanding communities and the institutions that support them within the protected areas. Men and women often have different roles in the management of natural resources; understanding who has access to and control of natural resources and who benefits from those resources is essential to sustainable conservation. For example, the team often found women defined as “amas de casa” (housewives) which masked their roles as daily managers of natural resources. Women are a significant force, both informally as environmental managers in the home and formally, as women park directors, park rangers, NGO leaders and members of local reserve committees. The latter dispelled the commonly held notion that protected areas are too rural and remote to attract female professionals. Women also play a central role in environmental education because of their intimate relationship to their communities and families.

There is good experience within PIP in working with gender in the field (especially in the Andean region) and there is evidence of some attempts to examine institutional aspects of conservation and gender (Sierra de Las Minas). However, this experience is diffuse. The new manager of the Community Conservation Balancing Theme will have the opportunity to strengthen the role of gender and gender analysis within the Program. There is a need for clarity on how gender relates to conservation and community participation. For example, the rationale for working with communities is to strengthen the conservation ethic and assure the viability of the reserves. Gender is a central variable in working with communities, affecting how societies are organized and, in turn, how they relate to their environment.

Recommendation: There is a need for PIP personnel, supported by the TNC Community Conservation Balancing Theme (a) to document the PIP experience with gender, (b) to clearly relate gender to conservation and to the work with communities, (c) to draw for assistance on the many NGOs and other groups in each country who work with women and women’s issues, and (d) to develop a gender strategy that supports the work of the protected areas, defines the gender training and leadership needs at each site, and is in line with the USAID policy on gender.

Developing a Strategy for Reaching the Hard to Reach: To engage communities in conservation and to fully utilize their knowledge of natural resources special efforts must be used to reach the hard to reach, especially indigenous populations and women. The team also identified late adolescents as difficult to reach and important in their role as the next generation of advocates for conservation and users of natural resources. There are also those people that are hard to win over, hard in the sense that they have been disadvantaged by the conservation efforts of the program because of protected area restrictions on access and resource use. Many of the sites the team visited have reached out to these groups in creative ways, particularly with indigenous people, but there are NGOs within each of the countries the team visited that focus on working with, for example, indigenous groups and women which have not been tapped by the PIP Program for their expertise.

Recommendation: TNC and its partners need to expand their network to access the expertise of other NGOs who specialize in reaching out, particularly to women, indigenous groups, and adolescents.

In conclusion, because conservation is a social process, TNC and its partners must be very clear about their role and their methods in working with communities at all levels, but particularly at the local level. The TNC Community Conservation manager can provide the leadership for achieving these goals but needs support. One option to be considered is expanding the model of using a regional community conservation manager in the Andean and Southern Cone Region to the other TNC regions.

Given the clear commitment from TNC and its partners and USAID to working with communities as a means of assuring the sustainability of PiP Program protected areas, there is a need to take a hard look at several years of field experiences and of the work being done under the Community Conservation Balancing Theme. The objective would be to understand what has and hasn't worked and, where necessary, to bring clarity and focus to how best to "develop community constituency to support sustainable management of targeted parks and reserves."

Recommendation: That TNC undertake an analysis of its work on community conservation that includes taking stock of past and present work and identifying programmatic strengths and weaknesses, defining its target audiences and assessing whether appropriate strategies are in place to respond to different community subgroups, examining the organizational structure in Washington and in the field to see whether improvements are needed, examining whether the lessons TNC is learning in this area are being successfully passed on to its partners, examining the role and function of learning centers and the learning process, and reviewing and revising the conceptual framework under which community conservation activities are currently being carried out.

D. IR#4 Non-USAID Funding Sources Obtained or Created for Targeted Parks and Reserves

This Intermediate Result focuses on creating the conditions whereby financial sources other than those from USAID will permit continued operation and management of the targeted reserves at the end of the PiP Program cycle. In this context USAID- PiP Program resources and technical support can be viewed as catalytic inputs that enable a minimum level of conservation management and credibility to occur. This, in turn, will foster more permanent and complex funding schemes. It is important to recognize that financial self-sufficiency is not just a critical step or a final score but a process that needs permanent, systematic follow-through.

The countries and sites visited during the evaluation share six basic elements that are key to the financial self-sufficiency: (1) all five countries have a protected areas system in place; (2) all five have other international donors active in biodiversity conservation funding; (3) in all cases national environmental funds are present and active and have some degree of involvement with the PiP Program sites; (4) there is at least one established, often dominant NGO in each country; (5) there is generally insufficient government participation in funding conservation activities; and, (6) with few exceptions the PiP Program, together with other sources, has contributed to promoting strong leadership by both the park and local NGO directors.

For all seven sites funding is available from at least three sources to varying degrees:

- PiP Program resources

- Government funding (federal, state, and municipal)
- Other private national and international sources.

Findings and Recommendations

The team recognizes the many complex issues surrounding this subject. We are concerned that in making prescriptive statements we will appear to be overlooking factors that the TNC and its partner NGOs have wrestled with for many years. Most of our uncertainty appears to center on questions involving consolidation and what it means in specific financial terms for the sites the team visited.

The team was driven by one overriding consideration: if a park is no longer able to carry out its basic protective function and begins, therefore, to lose its biodiversity, that loss is essentially irreversible. If the situation is sufficiently serious and the biodiversity losses are large, a "bust" will have occurred. Once it is gone, it is gone, and the cost and time for re-establishing it is enormous. A golden era followed by a bust is a waste all the way round. The principle defense against this happening is to have sufficient financial resources available to prevent that occurrence. Thus, in our view, **financial sustainability is absolutely essential**, a clear first among scorecard indicators equals. Funding is first, last, and always.

The basic site protection and management structure attained through the efforts of the PiP Program has succeeded in attracting resources from international and national donors, which in turn has resulted in a significant increase of funds available for conservation now and in the near future for all sites. Currently, all seven sites have some basic level of funding from at least three different sectors. However, with the exception of Sierra de las Minas and Sian Ka'an, the bulk of financial commitments from the various donors are primarily short term. This puts the conservation efforts of the other five sites at risk, especially if a major source of support disappears or slows significantly.

The team has concluded that at most sites financial planning has been a secondary concern, almost an afterthought, and not undertaken until late in the PiP Program project cycle. This is ironic, given that financial planning is one of TNC's greatest strengths in its domestic conservation program. This shortcoming was recognized several years ago, both in the earlier evaluation (p. 8) and in TNC's own training manual:

Most ... areas are currently experiencing a "hand to mouth" financial condition, dependent upon insecure national budget allocations, sporadic support from conservation organizations, and short-term international project funding. A major impediment to improving this precarious funding situation ... is found within each of us, the professional conservationists of the hemisphere. Unfortunately, many of us tend to be more skilled in such fields as park protection and biological sciences and avoid our critical role as the financial planners and portfolio managers for our hemisphere's natural capital. ("Developing a Long-Term Financial Plan for Parks and Protected Areas," p. 2.)

Surprisingly little has been accomplished in this critical area in the years since, even though several sites are in the process of leaving the intensive funding stage of the program.

With regard to the seven sites the team visited, our review of their financial plans indicated that the funding needed to assure the continuation of essential park services was available at only two sites, Sian Ka'an and Sierra de las Minas. The other five parks face varying degrees of financial uncertainty,

ranging from only having funds on hand for less than 90 days of operations (although shortly anticipating major funding from another bilateral donor) to nominal funding surpluses (of which substantial amounts consisted of requests under consideration, and were not assured). Our working definition of financial sustainability was having sufficient assured or committed resources to cover basic park operating costs.

We recognize that such a financial goal is a difficult target, especially within the time frame of the PiP Program. However, we believe that reaching the target is critical, and that USAID and TNC have correctly set the bar high. Had the bar been set somewhat lower, namely to have only a draft financial plan completed and recurrent and/or sustainable sources and mechanisms identified (benchmark #3), all sites would doubtlessly be much closer to meeting their targets. But such is not the case, and properly so. Therefore, we propose the following:

Recommendation: That with the exception of Sian Ka'an and Sierra de las Minas, none of the other five sites visited or other sites leaving the intensive phase of PiP Program funding be considered eligible for consolidation unless they meet the requirement of achieving a consolidation scorecard indicator benchmark of 4, that is, the long term financial plan completed and recurrent and/or sustainable sources and mechanisms are being implemented to cover basic reserve management costs.

Recommendation: That no approval be given to initiating work on any new PiP Program site unless the objective of achieving financial sustainability is addressed from the outset, and that TNC is prepared to assist the site(s) with working towards resolving funding issues until such time as an indicator benchmark 4 is achieved.

Some innovative and reliable long-term funding mechanism(s) might include:

- Raise an endowment, earmarked for each reserve, equivalent to approximately three years of the reserve's current budget (that is, if the reserve has a minimum operating budget of \$250,000 per year, then the reserve's endowment should be least \$750,000).
- Secure funding from the nation's environmental fund that guarantees an annual cash flow equivalent to approximately one-third of the operating budget and an equivalent government counterpart contribution to cover basic personnel costs.
- Formalize long-term commitments from a national or international private source (foundation, business enterprise, or conservation group) to fund two-thirds of the annual budget of the reserve with the remaining one-third being government matching funds.

At six of the seven sites visited there was no permanent, organized effort to raise funds. Although Mexico's Natural History Institute of Chiapas (IHN) once had the intention of hiring a permanent funding development officer, ironically it had to cancel the initiative because of lack of funds. Only Sierra de las Minas has launched a capital campaign and secured minimal seed funds for its endowment. The directors of the other five parks have not seriously considered launching a capital campaign to create individual site endowments or a combined effort similar to that of the GEF Pilot Protected Areas managed by the Mexican Nature Conservation Fund (FMCN).

Recommendation: That both above alternatives be explored by all sites. In the case of La Encrucijada and El Ocote, a permanent fund-raising position could be shared with the other Chiapas sites, El Triunfo and La Sepultura. NGOs can assist by developing

proposals to obtain financing for an intensive, three-year fund-raising campaign. TNC needs to play a key role in this effort by providing technical and financial support.

Attempting to assign values to the totality of natural ecosystems has proven to be a daunting task because many of the benefits are nonconsumptive. Yet many consumptive items (timber, for example) have been valued for centuries, whereas others (genetically significant plant materials) are in the early stages of being assigned specific economic value. Assigning economic and environmental values to protected areas is clearly a pioneering effort whose findings are subject to much controversy. Nonetheless, one means of shifting the burden of supporting park maintenance from external funding (donors) to internal, market-based funding is to capture more of the values from protected-area resources—ecotourism, recreation, environmental services, sustainable agriculture, resource extraction, and bioprospecting.

Recommendation: Conduct an analysis, even if necessarily imperfect, of the value of the environmental services and ecological functions of the parks to facilitate or promote the short- and medium-term resource mobilization needed for basic operation and conservation activities. In this respect we recommend launching a study to identify what kind of values and services are specific to each area and use these determinations as fund-raising arguments with all stakeholders. The pioneering initiative of Costa Rica to achieve protection of natural areas by marketing the country's environmental riches should be analyzed and, where appropriate, adapted to the local conditions of each site.

Some of the protected areas visited during the evaluation are close enough to tourist destinations to provide income generation for the parks from a reasonable flow of adventure tourism. The team identified such opportunities at several sites.

Recommendation: Consider upgrading the lodging infrastructure at places like La Encrucijada and Machalilla/ Isla de Plata, and use those facilities to start a small-scale specialized tourism operation. This might be done by granting concessions to private operators willing to manage the facilities in exchange for sharing profits with the reserve. It may be possible for TNC to promote the venture among its members.

Procurement Practices

In its visits to the three Mexican parks, the team noted the lack of compatibility among vehicles, out-board motors, boats, and other equipment purchased under the program. We cannot say with any assurance that circumstances are similar in other parks because we saw only a single park in each of the other countries visited. However, we suspect a lack of standardization exists. Trying to standardize equipment purchases may be appropriate in some cases: for example, computer and office equipment, GIS and photographic equipment.

Recommendation: TNC and its partner NGOs should examine their procurement practices to ascertain whether opportunities exist for working directly with a procurement firm to generate savings when purchasing certain common equipment and supplies.

There has been limited communication and coordination between international donors active within each country.

Based on the team's review of external funding requirements for various sites, we estimate that a period of from five to eight or more years may be required to locate and secure sufficient funds to ensure long-

term financial sustainability. Protected areas are not created equal, and some have greater attraction to donors than others. For the less fortunate, raising funds has been difficult.

USAID and TNC have a potentially very important role to play to rationalize and orchestrate that process. As was the case in two of the sites the team visited (Bahuaja Sonene, Peru, and Sian Ka'an, Mexico), PiP Program resources provided the principal funding during the initial years. Recently, the Dutch and the GEF-Mexican Nature Conservation Fund, respectively, have begun to assume that burden for several additional years. There doesn't appear to be a substantive reason why the process of reaching out to other donors to obtain support for conservation efforts in a country isn't reasonable. This could take the form of a jointly hosted USAID/TNC/NGO partner(s) meeting to ascertain the interest and financial involvement of other public and private donors in a particular country. This probably has been done in some places and not in others, and would be followed up as appropriate.

Earlier in this chapter we disclosed our misgivings about the issue of financial sustainability at individual sites. However, decisions are occurring at the national and international levels that are injecting a note of optimism regarding the transfer of new environmentally related resources to developing countries. They involve innovative responses to global concerns about mitigating climate change and conserving biodiversity. One logical beneficiary of the new modes of funding would be the system of protected areas in Latin America and the Caribbean. The team heard evidence of this at Bahuaja Sonene National Park in Peru involving Mobil Corporation's nearby exploratory work. Discussions are underway with Mobil on how it can participate in supporting the park. In Belize and Bolivia, U.S. utilities are pursuing carbon off-set projects, Quito is enacting a water use fee, and U.S. and European pharmaceutical firms are paying bioprospecting fees to collect and use genetic materials found in the tropical forest regions of several Latin American countries. TNC has been in the forefront of a number of these new funding initiatives. They represent a direction the team heartily endorses, one that deserves to have a prominent place in any follow-on program.

The significance of these activities is the heralding of a potential sea change in the financing of conservation, eventually changing the principal source of funding from external sources (donor-supported conservation) to internal sources (market-based payments generated by the products and services that the parks themselves provide). In time this might permit sites to "pay their own way."

Chapter 4

Assessment of PiP Program Management

This chapter comments on observations made by the evaluation team on the structure of the Results Framework, the quality and extent of customer service involving TNC and the local NGOs/communities on the one hand and TNC and USAID (USAID/W and participating LAC Missions) on the other, and the utility of project reporting documentation.

Results Framework [Statement of Work, p. 5]

The evaluation team is in agreement with the individual statements included in the results framework for LAC/RSD's environment objective, which includes the strategic objective (SO), the four intermediate results (IRs), and the critical assumptions (CAs) (see appendix C). The team does recommend clarifying the section headed "Critical Inputs by Other Donors" by amending it to read, "Global Environment Facility as well as funds from other donors (public and private) contribute to key park sites." *Note:* The latter sources are going to be considerably greater, more diversified, and more widespread than GEF funds.

Regarding linkages, however, the team suggests that the link between achievement of the IRs and attainment of the strategic objective is a necessary but not necessarily sufficient condition. As was poignantly noted during the team's visit to the Mexican PiP Program sites, particularly La Encrucijada and Sian Ka'an, it is quite possible to achieve all four IRs and yet not achieve the strategic objective. As written, reaching a #4 benchmark ranking in the consolidation scorecard's threats analysis indicator requires only that specific strategies be drafted to address priority threats. That is an output, not a result. Strategies and plans may be in place, and may even have begun to be implemented, but regrettably that is no guarantee that parks will survive the threat and biodiversity will be conserved. We see no easy answer to the dilemma, but believe it should be noted. For example, TNC's *Parks in Peril Source Book* (1995) states the following:

The most significant threat facing the Reserve is the Chiapas Coast Hydraulic Program being implemented by the National Water Commission (CNA) with financing from the World Bank. Under this project, 218 miles (350 km) of dikes and related structures are being constructed. This will divert the Reserve's usual fresh water flow to agricultural areas outside La Encrucijada. The completion of this project would have irreversible ecological impacts on La Encrucijada. In a coastal wetland area north of the Reserve, where CNA implemented a similar project, the rise in salinity resulting from the fresh water diversion left devastated mangrove stands, which are dependent on a flow of fresh water.

The facts are that the project has since been completed, rapid siltation has begun to occur (choking down several key waterways), salinity has increased, and water hyacinths are spreading rapidly. We recognize that the PiP Program as well as the director of the reserve have made great efforts to address these issues, that they are arrayed against powerful economic and political interests whose legitimate concerns are at odds with the objectives of the reserve, and that finding ways to accommodate these competing agendas are a major objective of the program. The team's concern (and frustration) is that the biodiversity resources of the reserve may be at least partially lost despite the best efforts of TNC, its NGO partners,

park management and other conservation groups. Thus it is possible for the IRs at La Encrucijada to have been successfully met even as the conflict over the reserve's future is in doubt—a victory in the local threats battle but a loss of the war. The situation in Sian Ka'an is similar although the specific threat is different (involving the spread of tourism facilities south from Cancun).

This points up the fact that some, or possibly most, PiP Program sites are hostage to actions and events beyond the immediate control of site managers and NGO partners. In fact the principal threats may have little if anything to do with the site itself—a policy change emanating from the capital, for example—or are of such a magnitude that the resources available locally are quite insufficient to mitigate the threat. These externalities, and their potential impacts on the program, are unaccounted for in the results framework. It is insufficient simply to add another critical assumption to the results framework (although that needs to be done as well). Such threats need different and special attention, frequently at the national level.

Recommendation: USAID (Washington and Missions), TNC, and relevant NGOs need to create a critical threats group that will determine an appropriate plan of action for each site facing a major threat. The group will need to assess possible actions or interventions at the national or international level, identify potential allies, mount an informational campaign, and so forth. Collective action provides reasonable hope that at least some threats can be averted or better managed.

Recommendation: Amend the results framework to include an additional critical assumption identifying external threats as a potential obstacle to achieving the strategic objectives.

The discussion of IR#1 raised the matter of government participation in the program and suggested that governments' roles be made more explicit. When this project was first designed the role of government was downplayed because the emphasis was on strengthening NGO structures and developing basic park infrastructure. As the program evolved, however, the role and importance of government has become more clear. Except in limited circumstances, protected area systems must necessarily involve either the national or the local government (often both) in matters of oversight, legal status, funding, protection, and public constituency. Making those roles more explicit in any project extension or new proposal would increase the likelihood of achieving the PiP Program's goals and objectives.

How might those roles be framed? The team believes it is not realistic for us to suggest how governments can be better engaged beyond offering generic examples such as working to set up co-management regimes or providing training and technical assistance. This will vary enormously from site to site and will require an attitude that sees governments as necessary and even desirable partners in working toward similar ends. The objective of working more closely and systematically with governments should be expressed as an IR, so that all actors at the site level are regularly challenged to use their imagination to come up with appropriate answers. It may be difficult, but no more difficult than engaging diverse communities in areas adjacent to protected areas.

Recommendation: That any project extension include an additional intermediate result that it would seek to enhance the capacity of the government agency or agencies legally responsible for site management through strategies to influence policy and stimulate cooperation and support for that agency. Emphasize assistance in developing co-management regimes, training key personnel, and strengthening capacity for strategic

planning and management.

In response to the Statement of Work questions on consistency and suitability of reporting data, the team found no major discrepancies between what was seen during site visits and the data reported in TNC work plans or evaluations or in LAC/RSD's R4. The team does suggest that consideration be given to re-examining certain indicators:

- The indicators for IR#1 are largely outputs and are easily measured;
- The indicator for IR#2.2 makes no overt distinction between major and minor policy interventions and focuses on outputs, not results. Other possible indicators might include NGO outreach to other NGOs (to measure effectiveness of working with other NGOs or financial sustainability of NGOs).
- The indicator for IR#3.1 is unclear (does "awareness" include all factors listed?). More importantly, the awareness targets seem low. It appears that additional informational outreach needs to be built into the program so that a much larger percentage of the population will be reached.
- The indicator for IR# 4.2 measures long-term financial management plans. The evaluation team has examined several such plans; and while it has no opinion on the accuracy of cost projections (*note: capital replacement expenditures appear not to have been budgeted in several instances*), it believes that most financial sourcing plans are not adequate.

Customer Service [Statement of Work, pp. 5– 6]

The following observations are, by their nature, impressionistic and were influenced by the nature and structure of the evaluation. The preselection of groups did not allow for observations or discussions with a full cross-sample of respondents. Nonetheless, the team is satisfied that it obtained a sufficient glimpse of how the program is structured to feel confident in passing along these comments.

At all seven of the sites visited by the evaluation team there appears to be uniformly good customer feedback between the partner NGO(s) and TNC's field staff. As discussed in chapter 3 under section B, NGO capacity building is one of the strong suits of the project. This extends in several cases to the staff and management of the protected area, particularly when individuals have moved among conservation positions in government, the NGO community, and TNC. The three Latino TNC country directors have such experience, greatly facilitating the operational exchanges among the three actors.

Customer servicing of host country NGOs and communities also appears to be in line with project expectations. It varied somewhat from site to site, but generally team members noted few criticisms and considerable praise. NGO staff reported excellent relations with TNC field staff, and at all seven sites the communities visited were familiar with and appeared to be on good working relations with park and NGO staff. However, the team did not see much formal evidence of input and information flowing from the communities to park and NGO staff. Little evidence was seen either of community involvement in monitoring (monitoring plans in five sites were not shared) or technical advisory committees. The one site that stood out, where the opposite was true, was in Talamanca (Costa Rica). There the participation of community representatives and local NGO

members at the "site" was most impressive.

Generalizing on the role USAID field missions play in the program is not helpful; making a judgment on the basis of a snapshot can be mightily misleading. What *is* of note is that all Missions (with the exception of Costa Rica) dedicated staff time and resources to the evaluation. How much time depended on competing workloads and the timing of the visits. Mission staff accompanied team members in three of the five countries visited, and the team met with one Mission Director and would have met with a second but for a last minute emergency.

The correlation between active Mission participation and program effectiveness is not particularly strong, although Mission staff members have visited all of the sites. Of more importance are the generally positive expressions of interest in the program and the fact that a number of Missions are either buying into the PiP Program or are working directly with TNC on other conservation activities. The numbers are significant: PiP Program sites are located in 15 LAC countries; of these, three countries are close-out or nonpresence countries; of the remaining dozen countries with USAID missions, seven have bought into the program and are providing mission funds for project implementation. In addition, seven USAID missions are working with TNC on non-PiP Program activities. The approximate life of project value of these projects is \$12.2 million. Both figures indicate strong USAID interest in the PiP Program and in TNC. Such Mission actions appear to be the most relevant and significant facts. The Missions' participation will increase further when their own interests are directly involved.

The team concludes that the requirement for an in-country USAID presence is unquestionably growing, especially as the focus of the program changes and environmental and biodiversity policy interests come increasingly to the fore. Missions have varying degrees of ability to influence host country policymakers, and, where appropriate, they should be called upon for assistance, either singly or in consort with other interested donors, to "carry the water" on policy issues adversely affecting the PiP Program. In fact, the team noted that TNC should already be enlisting more USAID support in furtherance of program objectives, even if TNC limits itself to alerting and informing the Missions of significant policy problem areas. In Peru, for example, there are policy issues relating to INRENA, the Peruvian Government agency responsible for protected areas. It is appropriate for TNC and USAID staff to work together to address that matter.

Some aspects of this evaluation report have been difficult to write; this part is easy. Over a period of four months, the team has had numerous opportunities to interact with both USAID and TNC headquarters staff. Even judging by the rigorous work standards of both organizations, our assessment is that the quality of backstopping under the PiP Program is unusually high. Several team members who have a working knowledge of USAID programs have come to appreciate how important that can be to the success of a program. The principal individuals involved (Eric Fajer, Cynthia Gill, and Jeff Brokaw from USAID and Jim Rieger, Monica Ostria, and Brad Northrup from TNC) are highly knowledgeable about the program, work hard and effectively at overseeing program activities, and have excellent rapport with one another.

We attribute much of this to the following two factors: (a) continuity of program leadership—on the USAID/LAC side there have been minimal changes in the PiP Program manager position, and continuing good relations with the Global Bureau's Environment Office; on TNC's side, several individuals have been involved with the program since its inception; and (b) good chemistry—frictions and misunderstandings are minimal and important programming decisions are jointly considered and shared.

Annual Site Workplans and Evaluations [Statement of Work p. 6]

The team concluded that in general the reporting format and content are not excessive and appear to serve the needs of both organizations adequately. The quality and thoroughness of the documents are a marked improvement over the documents reviewed in 1995 by the prior evaluation team.

We suggest two minor changes in reporting: First, looked at together, the workplan and evaluation documents function well. Looked at independently, the evaluation should be prefaced with the same summary section that is included in the companion workplan, enabling the reader to obtain highlights quickly. (Any annual evaluation document that begins its first page with "Reconstruction of the elevated water tank at the Concepción field station ..." has lost all but its most dedicated readership.) Second, TNC should present semiannually a one-hour oral summary of key actions taken, major problem areas encountered, and major actions planned. Given the importance of the PiP Program, this summary report should be geared to office directors and above.

Chapter 5

Consolidation

The PiP Program tackles the challenges of, first, evaluating and selecting priority sites jointly with local NGOs and government authorities and, second, implementing successful conservation programs—while at the same time being accountable to USAID for the funds invested. This is not an easy configuration of tasks, and several evaluation tools must be deployed to evaluate progress toward measurable benchmarks.

In order to define the conditions to be achieved by each site at the end of the Parks in Peril program, the concept of “Site Consolidation” was developed. In this definition a consolidated park or site is one that has reached a predefined level of functionality and thus is no longer “in peril.”

As a first step toward defining protected area functionally, four general standards of site consolidation were identified: (1) basic on-site protection activities; (2) long-term management capacity; (3) long-term financing for basic site management; and (4) a supportive local constituency for the site. Within these four categories, TNC, its partners, and USAID identified sixteen criteria that provide a useful measure of functionality.

We support the consolidation concept as well as the general design of the consolidation scorecard. Parenthetically, we believe the application of the scorecard tool can itself be of great value for a related objective, namely, use in the *process* of developing an adequate scorecard system for each site, which can be as important as the resulting system itself. Where we see a weakness in the tool is in the equal weighting given to all sixteen criteria. For example, the team takes issue with the idea that Indicator B 4, “Monitoring plan development and implementation,” can be equated with Indicator C.2, “PiP site long-term financial plan.” We believe the latter is critical to the long-term viability of any site, as discussed later in this section, and yet it is assigned the same weight as an activity that is admittedly important but not critical.

If consolidation scorecards were used solely on a site-specific basis to assess progress among indicator levels, our concerns would be less. Unfortunately, despite the variability of external and internal conditions among sites, we find that the weighting of levels at a site is aggregated and compared with or against similar aggregated “scores” at other sites, or are measured against the aggregated score at one site during an earlier period and offered as evidence of progress. In such instances we believe the consolidation scorecard loses much significance.

For example, TNC has developed interesting data that look at relative and absolute changes in the total of each site’s sixteen Scorecard indicators. We learn, for instance, that for FY 97, “total advances, life of project” (a measurement of total increases of all sixteen Scorecard indicators at a site) the following “ranking” pertains to the seven sites the team visited:

	<i>Start</i>	<i>Current</i>	<i>Difference</i>
El Ocote	22	57	+ 35
Machalilla	30	57	+ 27
Sierra de las Minas	22	56	+ 34
Sian Ka’an	27	54	+ 34
La Encrucijada	18	53	+ 35
Bajuaha-Sonene	21	50	+ 29
Talamanca	17	40	+ 23

If one looked *only* at the current “rankings” one could assume that both El Ocote and La Encrucijada were just slightly ahead? ... higher? ... closer to consolidation? ... than the two sites that followed, Sierra de las Minas and Sian Ka’an. However, that substantially undervalues the long-term financing indicator, which the team believes is critical to site consolidation. If that one key indicator were given the weight (and significance) we feel is appropriate, then both Sian Ka’an and Sierra de las Minas would be significantly closer to being ready for consolidation.

The above point is made to underscore our belief that the consolidation scorecard needs to be more reflective of a site’s preparedness for consolidation. One option would be to customize every scorecard, assigning different weights to each of the 16 indicators depending on the particular circumstances at each site. Consider the case in which one protected area has a large population within its buffer zone while another is so remote that the impact by communities or resources users would be practically nil. For these two sites the indicator for community involvement in compatible resource use should have substantially different weights. While such a system would likely provide the most accurate snapshot, its drawback is that it would make comparisons across and between sites exceedingly difficult.

A second option would be to assign standard multipliers to some subset of the 16 indicators, effectively rank-ordering the indicators into, say three groups, for example, PiP site long-term financial plan (x3), community involvement in compatible resource use (x2), conservation science needs assessment (x1), and so forth. The benefit of this option is that it strikes a balance between the current system (which makes no distinction among indicators) and the first option (which assigns different values to each indicator) and still permits comparisons among sites.

Yet another option would be to identify what improvements are necessary to raise a particular site’s score to the desired level and then set “end of project” targets for each benchmark score. Critical indicators, such as sustainable finance, would still require a minimum of “4,” whereas less critical indicators could achieve benchmarks of less than “4,” the minimum required to accomplish an essential scorecard indicator. This information could be easily referenced in the initial site work plan.

Recommendation: That TNC revisit the procedures for how the consolidation scorecard is used and modify them to provide a more accurate picture of the specific circumstances facing each site as it moves toward consolidation.

There are two other points the team believes deserve serious consideration. First, the concept of graduation and consolidation should refer to partners as well as sites. This would eventually result in an expanded pool of NGOs and local institutions needed to carry out the conservation activities of the site(s) within each country. Second, the PiP Program should maintain a balance between conservation programs at the field level and capacity-building support for local NGOs and park staff. A program that focuses too much on program efficacy versus organizational strength of the local partners runs the risk of not delivering and sustaining quality and effectiveness in the long run.

Long-term financing, financial self-sufficiency and non-USAID funding sources obtained or created for targeted parks and reserves are equivalent terms for what can be considered the most critical intermediate result for the PiP Program. This contention was discussed in detail in chapter 3, section D, Obtaining non-USAID funding sources. This is the one critical achievement that can guarantee site management and conservation after intensive USAID funding ceases, even if progress in the other fifteen indicators is below the adequate or ideal level required for consolidation. In other words, you can have a score of 2 or 3 (meaning that progress is being made and areas are becoming functional) in the rest of the fifteen indicators and if you are financially self-sufficient you can work

on all of them and consolidate long after USAID-TNC financial support has been completed. The opposite scenario is far less desirable, especially if the program cannot retain key personnel at the site.

Our focus on the critical nature of the financial sustainability issue relates to the concern that if funding fails and the park "structure" disappears, the site faces a likely loss of biodiversity, and the loss of biodiversity is essentially irreversible. Therefore, it is our opinion that a site cannot be consolidated if its financial plan for long-term self-sufficiency and, preferably, the local partner NGOs' as well, have not been implemented. This condition would mean that USAID and TNC should be prepared to revisit consolidated sites that have not attracted sufficient non-USAID resources to cover basic reserve operating costs for the indefinite term. Tradeoffs between moving on to new sites and seeing the funding issue through at current sites (by continuing the effort to attract other resources) is or will soon be a significant issue, given the competing demand for program resources. But both TNC and USAID must be aware that not much will have been accomplished in the long term if the subsequent lack of funding undermines all that was accomplished by the program.

For both current and future sites, a mechanism for sharing, then passing the baton from USAID-TNC to other donors and funding sources during the journey toward market-based financial self-sufficiency should be explored in spite of the fact that few donors want to be takeouts for their peers. This will require significant public relations skills and a great deal of coordination from both USAID and TNC, but in the long run will mean a solid win-win formula for all sites and donors.

The ideal and final state of consolidation of a site is one where the park is valued as an indispensable element of wealth for the country, managed under one common strategy in which private, local, and federal conservation activities are interrelated and solutions are based on sustainable use in common agreement with the civil society. The successful use of economic instruments to foster sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity would then in a natural way lead the sites to a consolidated status based on market-oriented financial and operational self-sufficiency.

Chapter 6

Balancing Themes

The Statement of Work for this PiP Program mid-term evaluation asked the team to provide an initial evaluation of the PiP Program's balancing themes activities, focusing on management, purpose, and initial results. The balancing themes program was developed to provide additional USAID funds for the PiP Program, matched by TNC funds, to strengthen five “themes”: (a) conservation science; (b) community conservation; (c) conservation finance and policy; (d) institutional strengthening–self-sufficiency; and (e) interdisciplinary analysis. In addition, balancing themes funds support learning centers at three PiP Program sites visited by the evaluation team: Machalilla (Ecuador), La Encrucijada (Mexico), and Sierra de las Minas (Guatemala). The team found the term *balancing theme* confusing, preferring the more self-explanatory term *complementary funds*.

The briefing in Washington, D.C., by each of the balancing theme managers was the only time the team had in-depth discussions of the various themes and their management. In general, balancing themes in the field were not clear to any of the team members. Our limited observations included a need for greater clarity in explaining how balancing themes differ from and merge with regular activities. We came to understand the importance of the additional balancing themes funds, however, in supporting the reserves (for example, balancing themes funds in La Encrucijada were greater than core PiP funds). The creation of learning centers to facilitate capturing, synthesizing, and sharing lessons learned is an extremely important output for the balancing themes program.

Management

The team found the following points in the balancing themes management system of value. Each balancing theme is led by a manager and generally has a working group of interested people to help shape its strategy. Work plans and evaluations for each theme are produced annually. It appears that funds are given to support experimental, cutting edge activities, dissemination of lessons learned, and sites that are or will soon be consolidated. The team was told that many of the funds are allocated in response to site-based consolidation scorecard indicators. In deciding how funds should be spent at a site, there seems to be collaboration between TNC central and the protected area sites. The funds are ultimately controlled by the TNC staff in Washington, D.C. Balancing themes managers are located in Washington, D.C., and provide overall leadership for their “theme” as well as an important coordination in their area for the PiP Program as a whole. The balancing theme funds appear to give the TNC central office leverage for activities they feel are important. Ongoing thought and effort are given to developing a workable management system for the balancing themes program activities.

The team feels that four areas are particularly critical for managing the balancing theme program: (a) the coordination between themes; (b) how well the plan serves the client on the ground; (c) how well it is integrated into and coordinated with site plans; (d) the transparency of the process for deciding how funds are spent and to what end, taking into consideration the three categories for funding: experimentation, lessons learned, and consolidation. We suggest the above-named four areas be kept in mind during planning, monitoring, and evaluation of balancing themes activities.

Purpose

During field visits we were told of the results of various balancing theme activities, including studies on policy, site-specific threats to conservation, meetings, and dissemination workshops. Often balancing themes activities were not identified as such, so the team was unaware of the separate funding, which, although confusing for the evaluation, we took as a sign that these activities were well integrated into the overall plan for the reserve.

The team found a certain amount of confusion at the site level as to purpose of the learning centers, especially among people not directly involved with the concept and others at other sites that are to be served by these centers. The team found the term *learning center* confusing inasmuch as it implies a center set up for interested members of the general public for the explicit purpose of facilitating learning about conservation. None of the sites we visited were so set up, although we did visit the interpretive center at Machalilla, which provides information and exhibits on the reserve. The team suggests that only sites that have the experience and the resources to serve as a real center for learning should be so designated. For example, we heard of the learning center at the Rio Bravo site in Belize that earned income from training and had a history, before PiP funding, of providing information and programs to the public on the conservation of biodiversity. This type of site seems suited for the designation "learning center."

It may be for maximum impact that the funds used for consolidation focus on an annual theme (or themes) on a subject that a particular site feels needs strengthening, e.g., financial self-sufficiency. Then funds can be allocated in support of that theme, for training, for studies, for technical assistance, for lessons learned.

Recommendation: Learning centers need to "get their message out" by communicating with other sites, NGOs, and government agencies on their purpose and the outreach they offer. The original mission of the centers, which is to "serve both as a training ground for those interested in successful park-based conservation, as well as a testing ground for new techniques and approaches," should be reviewed. Consideration should be given to providing assistance to those outside the PiP Program as well as to other PiP Program sites (PiP Proposal, 1995). This sharing of lessons learned should be the central purpose of the learning centers.

Recommendation: Consider a program for sharing the PiP Program experiences and lessons learned with other PiP Program sites, NGOs, appropriate government entities, and the national and international conservation community. This strategy should be developed and implemented under the Balancing Theme rubric as a TNC central office activity. It could include, for example, an electronic learning center, the translation of scientific documents into informational texts for public consumption, coordinated research efforts, workshops on common themes, and learning through personnel exchanges. Such a program will require full-time staff for its implementation.

Initial Results: Some Observations and Recommendations

There seems to be a relative lack of attention to the subject of stewardship (management). Perhaps to rectify the imbalance, the conservation science balancing theme should be called "conservation science and stewardship." Under the stewardship component, more attention should be paid to management planning and the monitoring and evaluation of different services rendered and products offered by the protected area. Also the conservation science balancing theme puts a lot of emphasis

on skilled scientists and sophisticated hardware and software. Yet most of TNC's partners and site managers do not have such resources readily available to them.

Recommendation: More effort should be given to developing participatory methodologies for ecological assessment, monitoring, and resource valuation. There are examples of these methodologies at a variety of PiP Program sites and this experience should be shared.

The much-discussed question of breadth versus depth as strategies for deployment of limited PiP Program resources needs to be resolved. Is this a question the conservation science program could begin to answer in a more systematic way? Is there now enough experience with the PiP Program to be able to prepare a cost/benefit analysis of different levels of investment in each site? For example, does an \$800,000 investment in a key site, such as Sierra de las Minas, do more for protection of biodiversity than a \$200,000 investment in each of four sites? Would an analysis of the costs associated with the graduation of each PiP Program site shed any light on the question?

A centerpiece of the community conservation balancing theme has been the development and pretesting of the human ecological profile (HEP) by the learning centers. There have been studies as a result of the pretest, but the few we saw were not framed in a way to be very helpful to the overall effort to conserve biodiversity in the protected area. It is the team's understanding that there is to be a reformulation and perhaps a renaming of the HEP. This is in keeping with the findings of the team: namely, although the people in the field supported the idea of a human ecological profile, they found its implementation, as now conceived, difficult.

Recommendation: Whatever its future form or name, a "human ecological profile" should (a) explicitly develop its links to conservation and to tools used in the management of the reserves (e.g. threats analysis, rapid ecological assessments, and site conservation planning), and (b) be focused on its utility as a general framework for site-specific work (see the TNC PALOMAP study for a good example). It need not be a methodology because each site can draw upon existing methodologies for its implementation.

Recommendation: The community conservation balancing theme is to address questions of gender and conservation. It is recommended that community conservation continue to take the leadership on gender and conservation but, in addition, that support and funds be given to all of the balancing themes to stimulate creative ways for fully integrating the issue of gender and conservation throughout the balancing themes program.

The team saw evidence of the benefits of the ecotourism balancing theme: plans for interpretive centers; a study on ecotourism; collaboration between the reserves and local NGOs and others working with ecotourism; classes for training local people as tourist guides. However, in some of the protected areas there was little interest in using the reserves for recreation and tourism; rather there seemed to be a hope that people would stay away. In one reserve, we saw signs explicitly stating that the area was private property. The democratic, populist idea of encouraging visits to the reserves by the public so they may feel ownership of the protected areas and serve as advocates for conservation was often not obvious.

Chapter 7

Lessons Learned

In evaluating the PiP Program, the team members had a unique opportunity to learn a considerable amount in a short time, and from a variety of individuals with a variety of perspectives. From this valuable learning process the team identified the following significant lessons:

- 1 By using the principles of adaptive management, the PiP Program has been successful in working in a variety of settings and circumstances. It is through this process of adaptation that a general program with standard tools can be custom-fitted to the needs and management situation of individual sites.
- 2 Maintaining creativity requires that a balance be struck between accountability and flexibility. Inevitably there is a tension between producing deliverables and scorecard ratings, while at the same time remaining alert to, and addressing, other factors or other ways of achieving results that may be of equal importance to quality long-term management in a particular site.
- 3 Governments must be brought in more systematically as active partners in the program. Strategies, specific outcomes, and indicators of success are needed to work most effectively with the agencies legally responsible for the management of the PiP Program site.
- 4 A three-year time frame for consolidating sites appears unrealistic, and there is no evidence that a set formula can work in all cases. The decision when to terminate USAID funding must be made on a case by case basis, taking into account the scorecard, the magnitude of threats, as well as many other determining factors that will vary from site to site.
- 5 The concepts of graduation and consolidation should apply to partners as well as sites. Over time, the relationship between TNC and its partners should grow from mutual dependency, related to specific goals, to mutual support for larger programs within coalitions.
- 6 Success in the policy arena requires operational cooperation between USAID, TNC, partners, and coalitions. In-country TNC coordinators seem critical in organizing and managing such efforts.
- 7 Efforts to finance protected areas should begin to take advantage as soon as possible of market-based finance as a complement to donor-based or government-based finance. This will demonstrate, as will no other way, the true economic values of the products and services rendered by the protected area. This is not to suggest that the many other values of protected areas, which cannot be priced or traded in the market, are not equally important. Rather, this is to suggest that donor or government finance not be used to subsidize the marketable aspects of protected areas.
- 8 Financial planning for the long-term management of a site is essential and should be started from the beginning of project activities. Basic protection and basic finance need to be seen as

being inseparable elements of PiP Program site management. It is not useful to start one without paying close attention to the other.

- 9 Income generating activities for communities, partners, or sites need to be treated as businesses and managed accordingly. It is unrealistic to expect community members, local partner organizations, and on-site managers to be able to develop in short periods of time the business skills necessary to manage businesses successfully, particularly while carrying out their other duties at the same time.
- 10 When developing alternative resource uses the following principles should be followed:
 - all activities should relate to conservation threats;
 - the activity should have a competitive advantage;
 - there should be value added to the resource; and,
 - there must be a reliable market
- 11 Working with communities has changed their attitudes, often dramatically, toward the protected area. Implementation of a good neighbor policy, and demonstrated interest for the well-being of the neighbor has proven to be effective in gaining their support.
- 12 Because conservation is a social process, TNC must be very clear about its role and its methods with respect to surrounding communities. This clarity is needed so that TNC continues to focus on its core strengths, reaches out to partners who have complementary strengths, and finds creative ways to attract financing from social development funds for community work.
- 13 Strategies for developing urban constituencies for the PiP Program sites are important, and in some cases, as important as working with local communities. In most countries the urban constituencies tend to have more political clout than rural communities. Thus, they can be key players in lobbying for the support of legal or policy changes needed to reduce threats to PiP Program sites.
- 14 A clear distinction is needed between activities aimed at community relations, community awareness, and development of alternative resource uses through economic activities. In each case, different kinds of interventions and strategies will be needed. To engage communities in conservation and fully to utilize their knowledge of natural resources, special efforts must be made to connect with the hard to reach, particularly women and indigenous groups.
- 15 The transition of community involvement in management of protected areas (from awareness, development of sustainable resource uses, or employment) to sharing in decision-making is a significant change that requires careful preparation. The quality of the decisions made will only be as good as the site-based knowledge of the decision-makers. Consequently, it is important that local communities also play an important part in monitoring programs, and in following the issues related to finance.
- 16 Conservation of biodiversity cannot be achieved at only one or a few sites, or with only one or a few partners in any given country. On the other hand, resource limitations make it unwise to work

all over the map with all interested parties. Thus a strategy to work in depth in a few sites and with a few partners might be complemented by a second strategy that works more broadly with several (not many) sites and several (not many) partners.

- 17 Basic protection of a site attracts other donors. It seems to have the effect of putting a site on the map. Once a site has active management and basic infrastructure, it signals the importance attached to that site by the government, TNC, and USAID. Other donors can physically visit the site, talk to managers, and see the potential for long-term management.
- 18 By focusing on site-based conservation, the PiP Program has tended to be somewhat isolated from on-going national, regional, and international programs.
- 19 Care needs to be taken so that tools such as threat analysis, gender analysis, partner NGOs, REA's, the scorecard, and income-generating activities do not become ends in themselves. Leadership, common sense, and creativity are essential to assure that the management situation is understood in all of its complexity and that realistic objectives for management are set and achieved.
- 20 Avoid overprogramming of budgets so that unexpected events, such as natural disasters, changes in personnel, or new complications, can be accommodated without putting at risk overall management.
- 21 TNC plays a critical, and unique, role in serving centralized or regional functions for its partners, especially the ones represented by the balancing themes. This role is important even if divorced from the program administration role assumed for the USAID Project.

Chapter 8

The Future . . . : Whither the PiP Program?

The team is unanimous in its support of a follow-on PiP Program. Our reasoning is severalfold:

First, the need is there, and time is of the essence. Threats to the LAC region's biological diversity over the past decade have, if anything, become more acute. Two contributing factors stand out, one that is long-standing and another that is recent: (1) population pressures have continued to mount, including both inside nominally protected areas and near them, increasing the demands on land for timber, agricultural products, and grazing areas; and (2) the influx of large-scale investments for extracting timber, metals, and oil has surged dramatically since 1990, much of it focused in areas that harbor many of the continent's diverse ecosystems. (For example, money spent on exploring for metals has risen from \$200 million in 1991 to almost \$1.2 billion in 1997; timber exports have more than doubled between 1990 [1.4 million cubic meters] and 1996 [3 million cubic meters] —SOURCE: "Tropical Treasures," *Washington Post*, 25 April 1998.)

Second, the response of governments in the region to these threats has been generally slow or uneven or both.

Third, the PiP Program has amply demonstrated how the objective of protecting threatened areas can be effectively accomplished. This is visible on many fronts—creation of over two dozen functioning parks and reserves, a strengthened conservation NGO network, successful leveraging of substantial amounts of additional funding, and development of financial instruments that can eventually help shift conservation funding from donor-based to market-based sources. The lessons learned by both TNC and USAID under the PiP Program are invaluable in this regard.

Given that the needs are enormous and finite, what next? We understand that a two-year extension of the current project is under consideration. We believe that is a good and necessary step. In addition, we believe strongly that a follow-on activity is amply justified, one that builds on the successes of the current program—adding to the mosaic of protected areas in the region—and continues to experiment with delivery methods, new organizational relationships, and greater focus on policy.

In looking to the future, the team has substantive and procedural recommendations on how USAID and TNC might proceed. With regard to USAID, the team sees several issues and trends that should be taken into consideration in the planning of a future phase of the program. The most important of these are the following:

1. New, experimental work to examine the costs and benefits of a "T-shaped" strategy, which combines "breadth" elements that focus on working with a number of partners and sites in a country (the horizontal bar of the T) with the current "depth" focus that emphasizes in-depth work with a few partners and sites (the vertical stem of the T). The "breadth" element can be strategically linked with a new vision of ecoregional development, a vision that embraces parks

and partners both inside and outside the PiP Program and views specific sites in more holistic terms, meshing area biodiversity conservation objectives with regional economic and social planning objectives. The “depth” element is needed to anchor the program, providing core organizational experiential lessons for dissemination to newer protected areas, and ensuring long-term management security.

At present, it is difficult to predict which shape of T-shaped elements will provide the best results. Is the current shape, which emphasizes the vertical, the most efficient? Is a major shift in resources to a more balanced T warranted? Anecdotal evidence is used to argue either way. But in the end, the only way to answer the question is to design and experiment with different, specific models that test assumptions and measure results—as is being done, for example, with the Talamanca site. As monitoring programs begin to document results, it should become easier to develop a mix of approaches that will make the best use of the program’s financial and organizational resources. A word of caution, however. Because of the diversity of situations encountered at different sites, it will never be possible to have a set formula. Management of natural resources, as indeed all development activities with a social element, will always be a mixture of art and science. However, with more rigorous experimentation, monitoring and documentation of results, it should be possible to gain the insights that will help identify the mix of strategies with the best chance of achieving the largest benefit at the smallest cost.

2. Incorporation of work on planning for financial sustainability starting at the outset of site implementation and adapting lessons learned from other sites. Consideration also to be given to convening other potential public and private-sector donors even earlier in the process to determine interest and “funding fits.” That may result in the new PiP Program doing more mid-cycle or late-cycle funding, e.g., Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park (Jamaica).
3. Expansion of work in the policy arena at the regional and national level. Two types of policy engagement are envisioned: first, those responding to or anticipating site-specific threats or systemic threats affecting the entire system of protected areas, and, second, those that advance a methodology that shifts financing of parks from external (donors) to internal, market-based sources. Regarding the former, when policies linked to site-specific (or region-specific) issues cannot be solved at the local level, greater emphasis would be given to coalition building efforts (including or led by the USAID Missions) that engage other interested partners concerned about pursuing positive policy change. Regarding the latter, even more effort should be expended on seeking changes in financial policies and procedures that affect the long-term viability of the protected areas system, e.g., water fee charges in Quito or carbon sequestration “swaps.” The excellent policy work done to date offers exciting alternatives to the traditional mode of external financing and points to a new paradigm that has the potential to change the way most conservation is funded around the world. We believe a strong case has been built for additional financial and organizational support, one in which USAID should be playing a key, supportive role.
4. Development and implementation of a strategy for systematically supporting the government agencies legally responsible for the management of PiP Program sites, taking into account policy limitations on TNC’s use of USAID funds to provide direct financial assistance. *Note:* a policy waiver might be sought for such activities as training or site visits. TNC and its partner NGOs might engage USAID Missions in co-sponsoring that effort. At a minimum, activities might include joint workshops and conferences, and joint data collection, management, and dissemination; at the more active end it might include direct U.S. bilateral support for institution

strengthening.

5. Development of productive relationships with a broader range of partners having proven community outreach skills, especially those working on behalf of women and indigenous groups and with credit and small business. New partners within USAID should also be cultivated, e.g., micro enterprise programs. This outreach should be combined with a clear definition of the strategies, roles, and bounds that TNC and its partner NGOs intend to employ in working with communities.
6. Additional work on perfecting techniques for, and systematic application of, participatory research, planning and monitoring of protected areas resources.
7. On a tactical note, if a new PiP Program is to continue the solid work done to date—to take on the major, additional tasks outlined above plus the minor tasks recommended throughout the report—the cost of the program could increase significantly. Even assuming TNC is able to match that increase proportionally, there are indications that USAID/LAC's contribution to the program will not increase substantially, if at all. Since TNC and USAID cannot expect to make a similar impact on conserving the hemisphere's biological diversity without major additional funding, new sources (including other USAID programs) must be found.

In view of this funding reality, it would seem prudent for USAID and TNC to consider a plan for attracting additional donor assistance into the program on a matching basis. Although other donors currently participate piecemeal at individual sites, none are formally linked to the program. Such a plan would focus on a more broadly participatory process for the design of the next phase of the program. The objective of this expanded process would be to provide an opportunity to assess lessons learned to date, give full voice to current partners in designing a future phase, solicit views of government and other potential donors on future directions, and actively seek other funding partners (public as well as private) for the program. Although expressions of interest by other donors might be easy to obtain, actually getting resources committed is a rather longer process and is unlikely to occur unless a realistic time frame is allowed for development and approval of a specific funding proposal. Fortunately, since an extension of the current PiP Program is already under consideration, a financial "bridging" period would be assured and the timetable for a follow-on project would not be a critical concern.

The team recognizes the skepticism that will greet the idea of reaching out to partner with other donors. We are quick to acknowledge that "partnering: the concept" often doesn't work out so smoothly in practice and that joint programs require time and energy and involve administrative difficulties in coordinating with other donors. Nonetheless, there are successful joint programs, and the PiP Program already is experienced in doing a good job of leveraging funds along these lines. More importantly, we assume the question of where new and additional resources should come from should be clear concern to both parties. We offer one suggestion for how this idea can be approached: if this is seen as a "threat" to the existing relationship between USAID and TNC, it could also be seen as an "opportunity" to reach out at this stage and begin the search for new support for the time when USAID resources eventually terminate. We believe the advantages of assistance for the program and the creation of a larger and presumably more influential stakeholder group outweigh the disadvantages.

Appendices

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Appendix A

Scope of Work



U.S. AGENCY FOR
INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

June 30, 1997

MEMORANDUM

TO: Firms awarded IQC contracts for strategic planning, performance measurement and evaluation services by USAID's Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE)

FROM: Eric D. Fajer, AID/LAC/RSD/Environment

SUBJECT: Call for Proposals: External Evaluation of LAC Regional Parks in Peril Project (598-0782)

The Latin America and Caribbean Bureau within the US Agency for International Development (USAID) welcomes proposals from firms awarded IQC contracts for strategic planning, performance measurement and evaluation services, to conduct an external evaluation of the LAC Regional Parks in Peril project, a \$33 million, 10-year biodiversity conservation project implemented by The Nature Conservancy and local conservation NGOs. The external evaluation is expected to take place in the fall of CY 1997 (first quarter, FY 1998), with the final report due around February 15, 1998. Please see the attached External Evaluation Scope of Work for more details.

I. SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

Proposals should be submitted to Eric D. Fajer, Environmental Advisor, LAC/RSD/E, US Agency for International Development, NS 2242, Washington, DC 20523-0025 (Phone: 202-647-5677; Fax: 202-647-8098). A complete proposal should consist of the following:

(a) Title page: Including project title; name, address and phone number of the principal contact on the project; as well as the name and address of the organization under whose auspices the proposal is submitted.

(b) Information on key personnel: List the key personnel who will conduct the evaluation, including designation of the team leader. Please include biographic data sheets or CVs for each evaluator. These should also include the evaluators' experiences with evaluating other USAID projects. The availability of personnel for a 10-12 week period between October 1, 1997 and February 15, 1998 should also be noted.

(c) Illustrative budget: Including: (a) Salaries/honoraria (number and cost of person-days per person); (b) Travel and per diem; (c) Other direct costs (itemized); and (d) Indirect costs or overhead.

II. PROPOSAL DEADLINE:

The deadline for receipt of proposals in USAID/Washington is July 11, 1997. Funds should be available by October 1, 1997.

III. SELECTION CRITERIA:

Primary criteria for proposal selection will be the availability of high quality, key personnel able to perform the External Evaluation's Scope of Work (see Attachment I). Key personnel include: (a) Team Leader; (b) Park Management Specialist; and (c) Financial Specialist. A fourth team member, a community and gender specialist, will be provided through USAID's Women in Development Office in the Global Bureau.

High quality is defined as:

- (a) Spanish Fluency;
- (b) Significant environment and/or natural resources expertise, including the sustainable use of natural resources (experience in the Latin America and Caribbean region is highly preferred);
- (c) Significant experience working with non-governmental organizations and community groups (experience in the Latin America and Caribbean region is highly preferred);
- (d) Ability to work amicably and impartially with The Nature Conservancy and its partners;
- (e) For Team Leader: Substantial experience in the evaluation of USAID programs, understanding of USAID Results Frameworks and Strategic Indicators, and the development of methodology and questions for providing an objective evaluation;
- (f) For Park Management Specialist: Significant field expertise in park management in developing countries;
- (g) For Financial Specialist: Significant expertise in financial analysis and the ability to assess: (i) the financial sustainability of NGOs; (ii) the financial sustainability of the parks; and (iii) plans for raising endowments, trust, and local government revenues for supporting the parks.

IV. Additional Information

Inquiries for additional information can be made to Eric Fajer, Environmental Advisor, AID/LAC/RSD/Environment (Phone: 202-647-5677; email: EFAJER@USAID.GOV) or Cynthia Gill, Environmental Advisor, AID/G/ENV/ENR (Phone: 703-875-4252; email: CGILL@USAID.GOV).

PARKS IN PERIL EVALUATION: STATEMENT OF WORK

I. ACTIVITY TO BE EVALUATED:

Activity Title: Parks in Peril (PiP)
Activity Number: 598-0782
Date of Authorization: original 09/06/90,
third amendment 07/28/95
Date of Obligation: original 09/30/90 third amendment 09/29/95
PACD: original 09/30/93 third amendment 09/29/99
Major Contractor: The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
USAID SO Team Leader: Jeffrey J. Brokaw, LAC/RSD/E
USAID PiP Manager: Eric D. Fajer

II. PURPOSE OF EVALUATION:

This mid-activity evaluation will focus on the Parks in Peril (PiP) Program's effectiveness in achieving LAC/RSD's environment strategic objective: "Protection of selected LAC parks and reserves important to conserve the Hemisphere's biological diversity". Specifically, the evaluation will address whether the PiP program is satisfactorily: (1) strengthening on-site capacity to manage targeted protected areas over the long term, including providing adequate infrastructure and trained personnel for that task; (2) strengthening the capacity of local partner NGOs for sustainable management of targeted protected areas; (3) developing a community constituency to support sustainable management of targeted protected areas, including increasing awareness of the park's importance, increasing participation in its management, and increasing economic benefits from the park's maintenance; and (4) attaining or creating adequate non-USAID sources for targeted protected areas to allow sites to operate after USAID funding ceases. The evaluation will comment on whether strengthening the above four pillars ("Intermediate Results") of park management seems sufficient to enable sites to survive after intensive USAID funding for the PiP site ends. PiP will soon initiate activities in up to nine new sites, so it is important to discover whether PiP's modus operandi is appropriate for generating self-sustaining protected areas. The evaluation will also verify the accuracy of data presented by in the LAC/RSD R4, based on the methodology used.

III. Background:

TNC and its partner organizations, in collaboration with USAID, have designed the PiP program to conserve imperiled natural ecosystems, communities and species found in Latin America and the Caribbean by ensuring on-site management of officially-designated protected areas containing globally-important biological diversity. To date, the project has initiated management actions in 28 high priority protected areas, covering almost 20 million acres; 10 of these sites no longer receive intensive PiP funding. The purpose of PiP is to elevate

these areas from "paper parks," those legally recognized but lacking any real management, to functional protected areas, and to create the appropriate enabling environment so that these protected areas may remain functional in the long term. The program works primarily with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to assist government agencies (GOs) in the establishment of a permanent management presence in each protected area. Specifically, the program creates the capability of local partner organizations to survey and post critical boundaries; to recruit, train, and equip rangers and community extensionists; to provide protection infrastructure; to become technical and policy leaders in conservation; to promote local community participation in, and support for, management activities; and to identify and develop long-term financial sources to cover continued management.

In September 1990, USAID and TNC entered into Cooperative Agreement # LAC 0782-A-00-0047-00 to support Parks in Peril activities during FY 1991-1993. In September 1991, the Agreement was amended to provide additional support to the project and incorporate an add-on from the USAID/Mexico mission using funds from the Global Climate Change project. At the same time, the Life of Project (LOP) was extended through FY'94. In September of 1992, the Agreement was again amended to include additional funding and extend the LOP through FY'95.

In the winter of FY'94, an initial external evaluation of the PiP program was conducted. Based on the results from that evaluation, TNC sent USAID a new unsolicited proposal. Based on that proposal, a new five-year, \$20.5 million cooperative agreement (# LAG 0782-A-00-5026) was signed in September 1995, extending the LOP through FY'99. The new cooperative agreement also added new "Balancing Themes" elements to the Parks in Peril program, to better capture lessons learned from all sites, to support site consolidation, and to better incorporate conservation science, the participation of local peoples, conservation policy and finance, local NGO institutional strengthening, and other interdisciplinary analysis (e.g., ecotourism) into PiP site management. Currently, the total estimated cost of the grant from USAID (including both Cooperative Agreements) is \$33,721,000. The total TNC match for PiP is expected to be almost \$9 million.

IV. Statement of Work

A. Preliminary Research: To familiarize themselves with the activity's components and expected results, contractors shall interview appropriate LAC/RSD/E, USAID/Mexico, G/ENV, and TNC personnel, and review important PiP documents found in LAC/RSD/E offices including: (1) narrative on LAC/RSD's environment Strategic Objective in the FY'97 R4; (2) Environment Strategic Objective's Customer Service Plan and Monitoring Plan; (3) First

Parks in Peril External Evaluation (March 1994); (4) Cooperative Agreement # LAG 0782-A-00-5026; (5) recent Implementation Plans, site work plans and evaluations; (6) recent quarterly reports; (7) other relevant PiP policy memoranda, etc. Using the file information, indicators and results from the R4, and information from interviews, the contractor, in consultation with designated individuals from TNC, shall develop a Work Plan that shall include a proposed schedule, and descriptions of how the contractors propose to address key evaluation issues. This Work Plan shall be reviewed by the extended team (which includes selected AID/W, LAC Mission, and TNC staff) of LAC/RSD's environment Strategic Objective (SO), and approved by the USAID PiP Manager, before the plan's implementation.

B. Evaluation: The evaluation will assess the program's overall performance against the program's purpose and results outlined in the Results Framework (LAC/RSD's environment strategic objective in R4), as well as whether expected results are commensurate with available resources. The Results Framework for LAC/RSD's environment strategic objective, including data from FY'96, is presented in Appendix 1. The quality of project monitoring systems will also be assessed and recommendations developed for their improvement.

The evaluation will concentrate primarily on 8-10 of the Parks in Peril sites, including: consolidated sites (the 10 sites no longer receiving intensive PiP support); sites still receiving funds that were initiated between FY'91 and FY'93; and the most recent additions to the PiP portfolio (Talamanca, Costa Rica; Tariquia, Bolivia; and Pinacate, Mexico). At least three sites should be chosen from those in Mexico. If possible, some sites should also have extensive "Balancing Themes" activities underway there. Sites will be chosen through consultation of the evaluation team and the extended team of LAC/RSD's environment SO. Most to all of these sites will be selected for site visits, which should take approximately 4 weeks.

The evaluation will answer the following questions; present lessons learned; and make recommendations.

(1) Have we successfully consolidated sites?

* For sites which have left the intensive phase of USAID funding: Is there still on-site management after intensive PiP funding ends (as defined by the standards established in the Strategic Objective performance monitoring plan)? Are additional and adequate sources of private and/or public sector funding supporting protected areas management activities? Are local communities adequately involved in, and benefiting from, protected areas management? Is there at least one strong local NGO actively participating in protected areas management? Is it reasonable to expect that this NGO will continue, as appropriate, to be involved with protected area management? Have criteria for selecting and evaluating consolidated sites been transparent and adequate?

Are necessary components of lasting, effective conservation efforts present? What is the approximate cost and time needed to consolidate a PiP site? How should PiP institute programmatic monitoring at these sites?

(2) Will we consolidate additional sites in the near future?

* For sites still receiving intensive USAID support: Are PiP sites on track to consolidate, based on up-dated criteria, in a timely and cost-effective manner? Are the current park management interventions (broadly defined) appropriate and well targeted? What types of interventions (e.g., NGO strengthening, guard training, long term financial planning, etc.) has PiP done well at these sites, and what needs improvement? Has the capacity of local NGOs and community groups to manage protected areas increased significantly due to PiP interventions? Is there better conservation in and around the site because of PiP involvement, including unanticipated "spin-off" effects on local conservation policies, NGO strengthening, additional non-USAID funds coming into the site, etc? Has working primarily through local partner NGOs been an effective strategy for protected areas management in LAC? Is there now increased national and/or local government commitment to protecting that PiP site? For potential new PiP sites, should interventions be done differently?

* Consolidation Scorecard: Is this a useful way to measure program success, especially in light of the reengineered USAID? Is it a useful way to guide management interventions at a protected area? Is it a useful tool to train local NGOs in protected areas management? Does "consolidation" according to the consolidation scorecard translate into implementation of activities and processes necessary for long-term site sustainability?

(3) Management structure of PiP

* Results Framework: Does the Results Framework (Environmental SO of LAC/RSD R4) adequately articulate program results? How can it be improved? Are the data reported in LAC/RSD's R4 in support of the environmental SO consistent with observations made at site visits? Are these data (and supportive descriptive reports produced by TNC) useful management and planning tools for TNC and the local NGO partners? Can the Results Framework be modified to make it more useful to TNC and local partners? Should the Results Framework better capture anticipated results from Balancing Themes activities? If so, how would this be accomplished?

* Customer Service: TNC and local NGOs and communities: Is there adequate customer feedback from local NGO partners to TNC (Note: USAID defines "customers" as the targeted human

beneficiaries of our interventions. Our partner local NGOs and the communities that live in and around the protected areas are the ultimate customers of PiP. TNC is also considered a customer, though not the ultimate customer of PiP)? Is there adequate "customer service" of the local NGO (i.e., technical assistance)? Of local communities that are in or neighbor protected areas? Is there evidence of customer participation (i.e., local communities, local NGOs) in the design, implementation, and monitoring of PiP sites?

- * Customer service: TNC and USAID/W and LAC Missions: Is there adequate customer feedback from TNC to USAID/W? How can it be improved? Are USAID Missions involved in PiP management? Are sites with active USAID Mission participation performing better than sites with less USAID Mission participation? If Mission participation is an important factor in site management, how can it be encouraged and improved? If Mission participation is not an important factor in site management, how might it be improved given that Missions will co-finance new sites?
- * Annual site workplans and evaluations: Are these useful management and planning tools for TNC and the local NGO partners? Are these useful tools for USAID in light of reengineering? How can they be improved?

(3) Balancing Themes

Although it is still too early to judge fully the results from most balancing themes activities, there are several management and conceptual issues that can still be addressed. Do USAID Missions, TNC staff, and local NGO partners understand the purpose of Balancing Themes? Is the program well-managed and starting to produce results?

- * Management: Is TNC management of Balancing Themes effective? Is there adequate coordination within different TNC programs and regions? Is there adequate coordination between TNC and local NGO partners? Is there adequate coordination, if appropriate, among Balancing Themes subject areas? How is site selection for Balancing Themes activities determined? Are the criteria appropriate? Can site selection for Balancing Themes activities be improved? Is there adequate local capacity to implement Balancing Themes activities?
- * Purpose: Is the purpose of Balancing Themes appropriate and clear? Should more emphasis be on the "lessons learned" components or on "site consolidation"? Are Balancing Themes funds financing the appropriate subjects? Do planned Balancing Themes activities appear to complement other PiP efforts?
- * Initial Results: Is it too early to evaluate initial results from Balancing Themes activities? If not, which results

seem most useful for site consolidation? Which are least useful for site consolidation? Which activities are most innovative and worthy of replication? Which activities are a lower priority for Parks in Peril support?

V. Methods and Procedures:

Methodologies and outputs of the evaluation will follow those recommended in ADS Chapter 203.5.6 "Evaluation", as well as supplementary guidance on evaluation available from USAID at the time the evaluation is performed. In addition to a work plan as described in section IV of this Statement of Work, the contractors shall also provide a mid-evaluation briefing to LAC/RSD/E and the extended Strategic Objective Team as appropriate. All site visits will be coordinated with TNC, local NGO partners, and the LAC Missions. Upon entering a country, the contract team, along with appropriate TNC-designated staff and LAC/RSD environment SO core team member, will visit the Mission for a briefing and planning session. Designated USAID/W, LAC Mission, TNC, and local partner NGO staff will accompany the team on site visits as appropriate. Prior to leaving the country, the team along with those mentioned above will debrief the Mission.

Activities in Washington (and Rosslyn) will include: (1) interviews with LAC/RSD/E, other appropriate USAID/W offices, PiP personnel at TNC headquarters, and personnel of other NGOs that have worked with TNC on PiP activities in Washington; (2) review of project documentation including the LAC/RSD environment Strategic Objective's Results Framework, the PiP Project Paper, amendments, reports of past TNC evaluations of the project, data provided by PiP quarterly reports, data collected by monitoring systems (i.e., in Environment Strategic Objective of LAC/RSD R4), park workplans, agreements with NGOs and other documentation as identified.

Site visits will include interviews with local partner NGOs, NGOs from local National Environment Funds (where appropriate), host governments, park personnel, USAID Mission officers and advisors, representatives from local communities in and around PiP sites including women and indigenous people, as well as others as identified. Visits will be made to PiP sites to examine site based activities funded by the program.

A six-day work week without premium pay is authorized.

VI. Evaluation Team Composition:

The contractor team shall be composed of four individuals. It is preferable that all have experience in the LAC region working with NGOs and/or local community groups, and have expertise in environment and natural resource management issues including sustainable resource use. Spanish fluency is required for all team members. One team member, the Team Leader, must have substantial experience in the evaluation of USAID programs, and the development of methodology and questions for providing an

objective evaluation. The second team member should be an expert in protected area management in developing countries, although experience in Latin America and/or the Caribbean is highly preferred. The third member should have expertise in financial analysis and the ability to assess the following: the financial sustainability of NGOs, the financial sustainability of the parks, and plans for raising endowments, trust, government revenues, etc., for supporting the parks. The fourth team member, provided through G/WID, should have extensive expertise in community-level natural resource management activities and issues, field experience in Latin America and/or the Caribbean, and knowledge and experience with incorporating gender concerns into natural resource management projects. The evaluation team will include USAID/W and LAC Mission staff advisors to the extent feasible.

VII. Reporting Requirements:

(a) During site visit to Mexico: After visiting the Mexican sites, a special informal oral briefing will be given to USAID/Mexico staff in Mexico city. This briefer is important due to the important investments that USAID/Mexico has made into the PiP program.

(b) After site visit: Ten copies of a draft report, and an electronic copy in WordPerfect 5.1 on a floppy disk, will be due January 15, 1998. Over two weeks, the draft will be reviewed by USAID/Washington, relevant USAID LAC Missions, and TNC, and will be returned to the contractor with comments. The final report will be due February 15, 1998, or within 10 days after the comments are returned if they are returned after February 5, 1998. The final report will include revisions as provided by the extended team of the LAC/RSD environment SO. The contractor shall provide one single-sided, unbound copy of the final report, 20 two-sided copies, and an electronic copy in WordPerfect 5.1 on a floppy disk.

The report will include: (1) an executive summary; (2) the purpose and study questions of the evaluation; (3) a brief background of the project; (4) the team composition and study methods; (5) findings concerning evaluation questions; (6) recommendations; and (7) lessons learned. Approximate page length, not including appendices, will be 50 pages. Appendices will include a copy of the evaluation scope of work, work plan, and list of documents, consultants, individuals, and agencies contacted. Other appendices may be included as appropriate.

One oral presentation of the report's preliminary results will be given to USAID/W and TNC (simultaneously) after delivery of the draft report, so comments can be incorporated into the final report.

Appendix B

Work Plan

The evaluation team consists of: Laurence Hausman, team leader, institutional development; Allen Putney, protected areas management; Mary Hill Rojas, community participation and gender; and, Lorenzo Rosenzweig, conservation and finance. All with the exception of Ms. Rojas were contracted by Tropical Research and Development, Inc.; Ms. Rojas was seconded from the WIDTECH project, Development Alternatives, Inc.

In addition, up to a total of one dozen individuals participated in visits to each of the countries. Three individuals joined the team for more than one site visit: Eric Fajer and Cynthia Hill of USAID and Cristina Lasch of TNC. An ex-officio team member who participated in the entire trip was Margaret Burks. Other USAID Mission, USDA, TR&D, TNC and NGO partner staff joined us for visits to specific sites, and are listed in Appendix D.

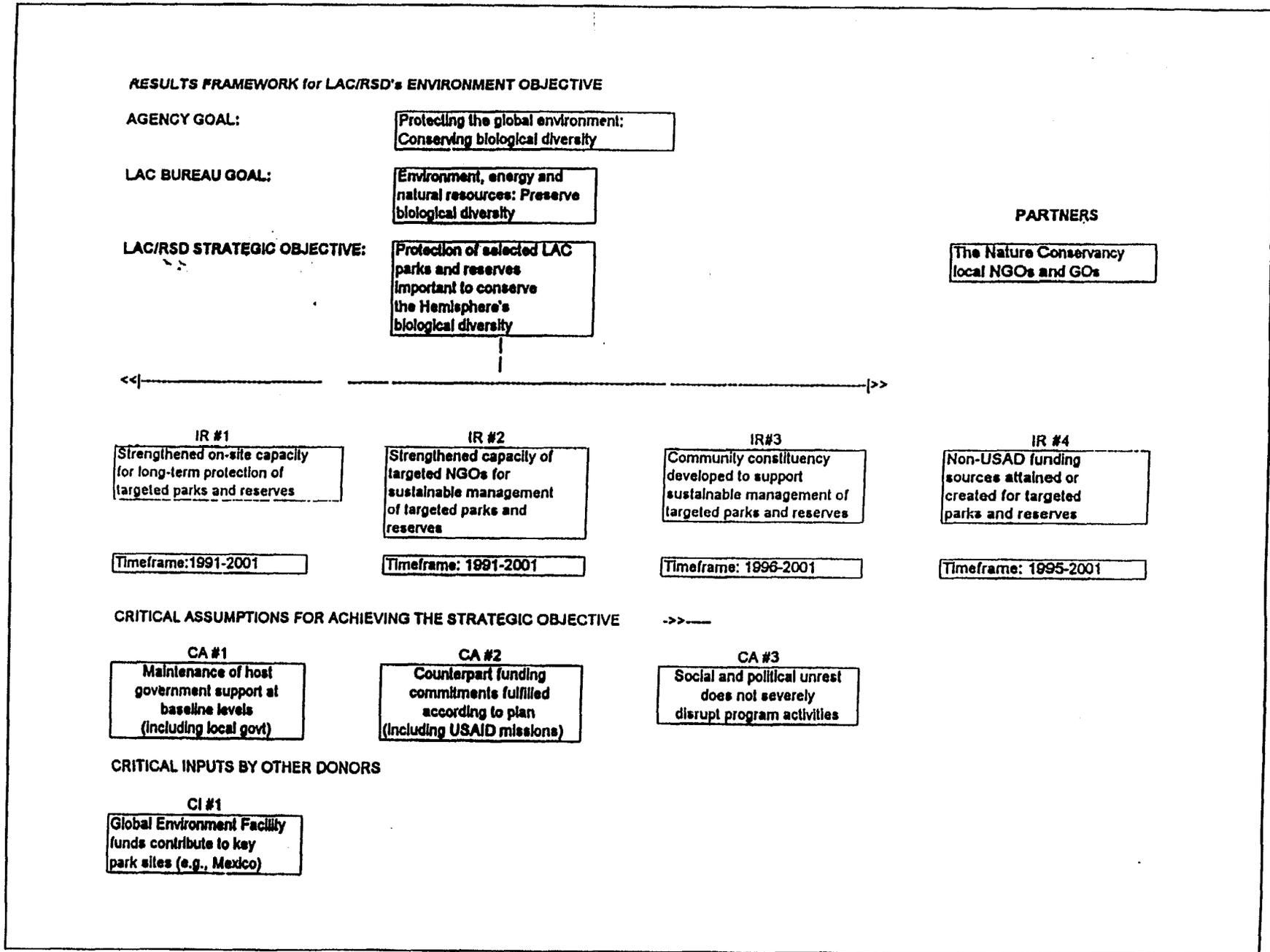
Work was initiated on January 26, 1998. The initial week (January 26-30) was spent meeting with staff from USAID and TNC, after which a preliminary work plan was developed. The meetings gave the team an opportunity to obtain more background about the program. The field work was broken into two segments. The initial segment consisted of two weeks in Mexico (January 31-February 13) visiting the following protected areas: La Encrucijada, El Ocote and Sian Ka'an. A debriefing for USAID and TNC staff was held in Cancun upon completion of the field work, and an uncirculated paper was developed on site observations.

During a three week hiatus, team members spent time digesting additional information. On March 13, several team members held additional meetings with TNC staff, and on March 15, the entire team regrouped to undertake the second leg of field visits, beginning in Ecuador - Machalilla (March 15-20), followed by Peru - Bahuaja Sonene (March 20-26), Costa Rica - Talamanca (March 26-31), and Guatemala - Sierra de las Minas (March 31-April 4). Formal or informal debriefings were held for USAID and TNC staff in all countries with the exception of Costa Rica, where a debriefing was held for the regional State Department environmental officer, Larry Gumbiner.

Soon after returning to Washington, the team met for several days to synthesize its findings. Those results were presented at a half-day debriefing for USAID and TNC on April 13. Since then, team members have been developing their respective sections of the report.

Most of the Washington meetings at TNC and USAID were group presentations. The field visits were a blend of group and individual sessions, in formal and informal settings. Discussions held with community members were also a combination of group and individual sessions. Although no formal questionnaires were used, the team generally conducted sessions using a format that focused on three questions: what works; what doesn't work; what suggested improvements would benefit the program. The majority of field interviews and discussions were held in Spanish. The team made a special effort to meet regularly at the end of each site visit to compare notes and agree upon a common set of observations. The team also worked extremely well together.

Appendix C. Results Framework for LAC/RSD's Environment Objective



Appendix D

Principal Contacts

A.1. Reserva de la Biosfera de La Encrucijada (RBLE)

Aguilar Lopez, Edmundo	Instituto Nacional de Ecología	(96)-1-41-731
Barrios, María Eugenia	Instituto de Historia Natural de Chiapas	(96)-1-41-731
Gordillo, Omar Gabriel	Instituto Nacional de Ecología	(96)-1-41-731
Jiménez, Francisco Javier	Instituto Nacional de Ecología, Dirección RBLE	(96)-1-41-731
Koller, Marina	Instituto de Historia Natural de Chiapas	(96)-1-41-731

A.2. Reserva Especial de la Biosfera El Ocote (REBEO)

Abarca, Eleazar	Instituto de Historia Natural de Chiapas	(96)-880-696
Coutiño, Nerin	Instituto de Historia Natural de Chiapas	(96)-880-696
Méndez, Adrián	Instituto Nacional de Ecología, Dirección REBEO	(96)-880-696
Nañez, Sonia	Instituto Nacional de Historia Nacional de Chiapas	(96)-880-696
Rincón, Maricarmen	Instituto Nacional de Ecología	(96)-880-696
Santos, Daniel	Instituto de Historia Natural de Chiapas	(96)-880-696
Tejeda, Carlos	Instituto Nacional de Ecología	(96)-880-696
Velazquez Martinez, José	Instituto Nacional de Ecología	(96)-880-696
Zavala, Gabriela	Instituto de Historia Natural de Chiapas	(96)-880-696

A.3. Reserva de la Biosfera de Sian Ka'an (RBSK)

Arellano, Alfredo	Instituto Nacional de Ecología, Dirección RBSK	(98)-83-05-63
Bezaury C., Juan	Amigos de Sian Ka'an	(98)-84-30-80
Carranza, Jorge	Amigos de Sian Ka'an	(98)-84-30-80
DiDonna, Juan José	Amigos de Sian Ka'an	(98)-84-95-83

A.4. Parque Nacional de Machalilla (PNM)

Fierro, Carlos	Fundación Natura, Ecuador	(593-2)-459-013
Ponce, Arturo	INEFAN, Ecuador	(593-2)-506-337
Zambrano, Carlos	INEFAN, Ecuador	(593-2) 459 013

A.5. Parque Nacional Bahuaia-Sonene / Santuario Pampas del Heath (PNBS)

Alfaro Lozano, Luis	Ministerio de Agricultura, INRENA, Lima, Perú	(511)-222-32-98
Czermenska, Jürgen	Programa GTZ, Perú	(511)-225-18-84
Paniagua Villagra, Alberto	PROFONAPE, Lima, Perú	(515)-446-68-60
Portillo, María del Carmen	Embajada de los Países Bajos, Perú	(511)-475-65-37
Suárez de Freitas, Gustavo (Ashoka fellow)	Pronaturaleza, Lima, Perú FADEMAD	(511)-441-38-00

A.6. Corredor Biológico Talamanca Caribe (CBTC)

Bustillo, Rosa	Talamanca Biological Corridor Commission	(506)-256-44-16
Ceciliano P., Karla	Fundación de Parques Nacionales, Costa Rica	(506)-257-22-39
Fernández Kalodziez, Manrique	Fundecooperación, San José, Costa Rica	(506)-225-45-07
Gumbiner, Larry	State Department, Costa Rica	(506)-290-84-04
Herrera, Carlos	Fundecooperación, Costa Rica	(506)-225-45-07
Lynch, Diego	ANAI, Costa Rica	(506)-224-60-90
Pearson, Eduardo	MINAE, Talamanca, Costa Rica	(506)-755-00-60
Rodríguez, Walter	Asociación Pequeños Productores Talamanca, Costa Rica	(506)-758-49-72
Vargas, Erick	INBio, Costa Rica	(506)-224-28-16

A.7. Reserva de la Biosfera de las Minas (RBSM)

González, Maria José	Fideicomiso para la Conservación en Guatemala	(502)-237-21-74
Movil, Luis	Fundación Defensores de la Naturaleza, Guatemala	(502)-334-18-85
Nuñez, Oscar	Fundación Defensores de la Naturaleza, Guatemala	(502)-334-18-85
Rojas, Oscar	Fundación Defensores de la Naturaleza, Guatemala	(502)-334-18-85
Villagrán, Juan Carlos	CONAP-Guatemala	

A.8. United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

Brokaw, Jeff	USAID/Washington	(202)-712- 4177
Davis, Alan	USAID/Perú	(511)-433-3200
Dickie, Alex	USAID/Guatemala	(502-3)-32-0202
Fajer, Eric	USAID/Washington	(202)-712-0809
Geiger, Thomas L.	USAID/Ecuador	(593-2) 232-100
Gill, Cynthia	USAID/Washington	(202)-712- 4177
Gilmore, Judy	USAID/Washington	(202)-712- 4177
González, Carmen	USAID/Guatemala	(502)-332-0203
Maldonado, Fausto	USAID/Ecuador	(593-2)-232-1000
Marks, Jane	USAID/Mexico	
Moore, Thomas	USAID/Perú	(511)-433 32 00
Parker, Tracey	USAID/Guatemala	(502)-332 02 02
Zadroga, Frank	USAID/México	(593-2)-256-1228
Zuquilanda, Mónica	USAID/Ecuador	(593-2)-256-1228

A.9. The Nature Conservancy (TNC)

Bath, Paquita	TNC Washington DC	(703)-841-4880
Curtiss, Randy	TNC Washington DC	(703)-841-4880
Dugelby, Barbara	TNC Washington DC	(703)-841-4880
Green, Gina	TNC Washington DC	(703)-841-4880
Houseal, Brian	TNC Washington DC	(703)-841-4880
Keenan, Joe	TNC Washington DC	(703)-841-4880
Lash, Cristina	TNC Mérida México	(52-99) 20 2020
Lehnhoff, Andreas	TNC Guatemala	(502) 368 20 85
Leon, Patricia de	TNC Washington DC	(703)-841-4880
Libby, Michele	TNC Washington DC	(703)-841-4880
Miller, Greg	TNC Washington DC	(703)-841-4880
Moffat, Bruce	TNC Costa Rica	(506) 220 25 52
Muñoz, Maricela	TNC Costa Rica	(506) 220 25 52
Northrup, Brad	TNC Washington DC	(703)-841-4880
Ostria, Mónica	TNC Washington DC	(703) 841 37 68
Paco, Carlos de	TNC Costa Rica	(506) 220 25 52
Quinn, Dan	TNC Washington DC	(703)-841-4880
Rieger, Jim	TNC Washington DC	(703)-841-4880
Roberts, Carter S.	TNC Washington DC	(703) 247 37 31
Watson, Alec	TNC Washington DC	(703)-841-4880
Wilber, Scott	TNC Washington DC	(703)-841-4880

A.10. Other Contacts

Cabrera, Erick F.	Fundación Vida, Honduras	(504) 239 16 45
Yocum, Carlene	USDA Puerto Rico	(787) 766 5335

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Appendix F

Preliminary Site-Specific Observations

The mid-activity evaluation of the Parks in Peril Program (PiP) was conducted for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in three sites in Mexico (La Encrucijada, El Ocote, Sian Ka'an) in January, 1998, and in four sites in South and Central America (Machalilla in Ecuador, Bahuaja Sonene in Peru, Talamanca in Costa Rica, and Sierra de las Minas in Guatemala) in March, 1998. The PiP Program was designed to conserve imperiled ecosystems in Latin America and the Caribbean by "ensuring on-site management of officially designated protected areas containing globally important biological diversity." The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and its partners have developed and are implementing the program.

The evaluation team consisted of Laurence Hausman, team leader; Allen Putney, for management of protected areas; Mary Hill Rojas, for community development, participation, and gender; Lorenzo Rosenzweig, for conservation finance.

The purpose was to evaluate the overall Parks in Peril Program, using aspects of the site visits as illustrations. Because the PiP Program evaluation team spent only a few days at each site—too little time for understanding management complexities or for providing advice to site managers—there was no intention to evaluate each site. However, the team was asked by many site managers to provide feedback on what it saw and learned. The purpose of this appendix is to respond to this request by making explicit some of our observations about each site. These are not recommendations, for we know too little. These are simply observations, in many cases unverified, that might provide food for thought.

Multisite Observations

It is significant that we begin our observations in this section of the report by commenting on the quality of the staff that we encountered at each of the protected area sites. During the course of our visits we came into contact with a wide range of individuals working for the parks and reserves. They were employed in many different capacities: park administrators, secretaries, park guards and rangers, biologists, computer specialists, drivers, and guides. Rarely has so diverse a group left us as impressed with their professionalism, enthusiasm, and dedication. It was something that we as a team commented on after completing each site visit. If the future of the protected areas system in the countries we visited is left in the hands of this youthful group, we will surely be very well served. The PiP Program is fortunate to be able to count on such high-caliber talent to carry out its work, and we raise our hats in recognition and appreciation of that fact.

A significant percentage of the problems of and threats to the PiP Program sites visited can be traced back to government decisions or actions such as those leading to the hydraulic plan and works executed in the La Encrucijada watershed, the human settlements around El Ocote, the

tourism corridor along the Quintana Roo coast north of Sian Ka'an, the oil exploration and mining concessions in the buffer zone of Bahuaja Sonene, and the logging permits in Sierra de las Minas. Even minor issues like the Casuarina pines eradication effort at Sian Ka'an are linked to past and present governmental initiatives. This calls for a more intense and systematic effort in the area of environmental policy within the PiP Program countries. Applying "The Green Book" (developed by USAID for the Latin America and Caribbean region) to the PiP Program sites would structure, facilitate, and support a participatory policy dialogue.

None of the sites visited had completed a thorough analysis of the human component. The Human Ecological Profile of the sites prepared by TNC is a first approach, but needs to be worked to a finer detail. This would prove useful in the design of annual operational plans and would help focus on key stakeholders.

One of the advantages of joint funding schemes is the potential for leveraging resources. At none of the sites had government matching funds been negotiated as a mandatory element of the PiP Program. Negotiating such funding before program start-up is a good tactic, because it fosters an active role for government from the beginning, which can evolve into a regular annual obligation.

One strategic approach to conservation is through the use of environmental policy as a tool for developing local, regional, and national constituencies. One way to achieve such constituencies is through a communications and marketing campaign using brochures, field guides, and posters. None of the seven visited sites has the full range of promotional and educational materials needed for this constituency-building effort. Steps should be taken within the framework of the PiP Program to utilize better the technical capacities and skills of TNC in this field. For example, a section of the TNC magazine could be devoted to sites and experiences within the PiP Program, or an international version of this publication could be produced in coordination with the partner NGOs. These efforts should be coordinated with the much needed implementation of the financial self-sufficiency plans.

After five years of PiP Program funding at both La Encrucijada and El Ocote, each has a short-term diversified portfolio of funding sources available to cover project and operational expenses. Also, these sites share the benefit of having basic personnel salaries covered by the federal government, as in the other twenty-three protected areas of the National Protected Areas System (SINAP) of Mexico. A full-time person dedicated to fundraising for these two areas could be shared with the two other protected areas managed by the Natural History Institute of Chiapas (IHN). The possibility of financing the fund-raising efforts through a grant from a third source, with matching funds from TNC, was discussed with the two reserve directors.

La Encrucijada

The La Encrucijada Biosphere Reserve, in Chiapas State, Mexico, is an extensive coastal lowland area influenced by nearby mountains, the watersheds that flow from them, and the sea. It is charac-

terized by mangrove estuaries, semideciduous tropical forests, and seasonally flooded coastal forests. The reserve is managed by the Institute of Natural History (IHN), a semiautonomous entity of the Chiapas State Government, and has received support from the Parks in Peril Program since 1992. The 125,000 ha reserve has 22,000 inhabitants living within, 10 percent of whom live in the core zone. Shrimp are the base of their economy. The integration of the local population into the life of the reserve has been critical. The three primary goals in working with communities are the dissemination of conservation information (through radio and television), the implementation of environmental education programs (protecting marine turtles and the garfish), and environmental health (reducing garbage; supporting rural clinics). Many members of the reserve staff are from communities in and near the reserve, and some are trained in natural history. The most critical threat to the reserve is siltation of the coastal waterways, which once had a depth of 15 meters but in places now measure less than 5 inches.

Observations

1. The field station might be upgraded so that it could be used for ecotourism, research, and educational programs as well as for Reserve management. It could be let out as a concession both to generate income for the Reserve and to pass off maintenance of the facility to the private sector.
2. Populist principles would suggest that the area should be more accessible to the public, and strategies are needed to effectively address recreation (day use by locals), tourism (overnight use by nonlocals), and related educational opportunities. Public use programs would provide an opportunity to develop an urban constituency, especially in Tapachula. Technical assistance would be needed to assist staff in sorting through the options and implications.
3. Siltation of the reserve's coastal lagoons and waterways is obviously a major continuing threat. No doubt, coalition-building within the watershed, involving a diversity of community groups (e.g., campesinos, plantation personnel, and fishermen) is an important starting point. Yet it would seem that lasting solutions to the siltation problem will have to come through policy changes at the state and federal levels. It was not clear how site-level coalition building will, by itself, lead to state and federal policy changes. Are these local efforts being effectively linked to policy work at these higher levels?
4. Communications equipment that is not yet operational is a critical hindrance to management activities in the reserve. Is this a problem of the moment, or does more effort and budget need to be assigned to maintaining that equipment?
5. Women, a critical link to conservation, tend not to be actively involved in the program because
 - PIP Program staff members "don't seek women out";
 - men are central to most PIP Program projects which give little recognition to women's roles (e.g., the iguana farms are seen as men's projects, yet the women may kill, skin, and cook the animal); and,
 - women do not attend public meetings.

6. There is an encouraging attempt to reach women using women as extension workers. Building on this initial work there is a need for a systematic strategy and rationale for emphasizing gender as a conservation tool.

7. The reserve has done a good job in employing and training local people, men and at least one woman, as park rangers and as community project officers. Their knowledge of natural history was impressive. They also may need training in participatory methods for working with communities.

A strength of the environmental education work has been its links to immediate conservation threats (e.g., the protection of turtles and birds and the elimination of garbage from the beaches). The birds of La Encrucijada are extraordinary, and a good symbol around which to build environmental messages.

There have been studies to pretest the Human Ecological Profile (HEP) but they are not framed in a way to be helpful to the overall effort to conserve biodiversity in the protected area. The lessons learned from the pretest need to be shared with others working with the HEP. The social aspects of the program, in general, need to be integrated systematically into the ongoing research and monitoring component of the reserve.

El Ocote

The 48,1400 ha El Ocote Ecological Reserve, located in Chiapas, Mexico, is composed primarily of tropical rainforest, lower montane rainforest, and evergreen seasonal forests, as well as secondary vegetation. The reserve is managed by the Institute of Natural History (IHN) and has received support from the PiP Program since 1992. Landownership and land-use patterns within the reserve are a complex mosaic. The Netzahualcoyotl Dam on the northern boundary of the reserve attracted workers from other regions when it was constructed in the 1960s. Many of those workers have since located permanently in the area. The greatest threats to biodiversity are forest conversion for livestock grazing and agriculture. A major new highway being constructed through the zone will decrease the isolation of the reserve and probably increase tourism and recreational use of the area. The levels of health care, nutrition, education, and sanitation of communities within the reserve are low. Community programs have concentrated both on community development and environmental education.

Observations

1. The quality and dedication of staff was notable, and interinstitutional cooperation at the site level impressive. Where else do federal and state agencies, municipalities, and NGOs work so well together?
2. There is a need for improved facility design and the development of common design standards for the reserve.

3. It might be useful to consider upgrading the field station so that it could serve as a base for ecotourism, research, and educational programs. The station could be let out as a concession, thus generating income as well as passing off the cost of maintenance of the facility to the private sector.
4. As a matter of principle, and as a means of developing a constituency for the reserve in Tuxla Gutierrez, it may be useful to consider developing recreation areas and related recreational and education programs that would become accessible once the highway from Tuxla is completed. Technical assistance would be required to assist staff in sorting through the strategic issues.
5. There would seem to be an urgent need to inventory and evaluate the archeological values of the reserve, which, according to a recent television program, are significant. According to that program, the first writing in the Americas was developed and used by the Zoque culture at a major archeological site within the El Ocote Forest.
6. Communications equipment that was not operational is critical to the functioning of the reserve. Was this a transitional problem or is more attention to maintenance needed?
7. The reserve has begun to reach out to indigenous communities, working with Tzotzil women through an extension agent who speaks their language. These experiences need to be shared as most PIP Program sites work with indigenous communities, and there are lessons to be learned.
8. The community work seems vulnerable because of the uncertainty of funding.
9. The roles of women in managing natural resources (fish, plants, crops, coffee, chili, small animals, fruits, water, wood, kitchen gardens) need explicit recognition to overcome the prevalent stereotype of women as "just housewives." Because of these stereotypes it seems many PIP Program economic development programs are directed to the men. Women's importance for environmental education seems more clearly recognized. A strategy needs to be developed clearly defining the link between gender analysis and conservation and identifying obstacles in working with women and how to overcome them.
10. The monitoring and evaluation of community work needs to be an ongoing collaborative process with the communities. It should show the relationship of that work to the protection of the reserve. It needs to be integrated more fully with the monitoring of the biological processes of the reserve and include data disaggregated by sex.
11. Some examples of "income generating" projects appeared to be successful small businesses (e.g., coffee, cheese) based on sound business principles. These should be evaluated, documented, and shared with other PIP Program sites. In this documentation it should be made clear the how these activities relate to conservation.

Sian Ka'an

The Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve was established in 1986 and expanded in 1994 to an area of 617,000 hectares. This coastal area includes tropical forest, wetlands, and coastal and marine habitats. The reserve is administered by the federal environmental secretariat (SEMARNAP) with the assistance of the Amigos de Sian Ka'an (ASK), a private, not-for-profit organization; it has been supported by the PiP Program since 1992. Communities within and near the reserve have been involved in decisions on management of the reserve as well as with the development of sustainable agriculture, wildlife, tourism, and fisheries projects promoted by ASK.

Observations

1. There seemed to be communications problems between ASK staff at Carillo Puerto and Cancun.
2. There are several aspects of work in this reserve that would seem to merit case studies followed by dissemination of lessons learned. These include, especially, participatory monitoring of wildlife populations with Mayan communities and special outreach programs for work with Mayan communities, particularly women.
3. The regional planning aspects of Amigos de Sian Ka'an was far more elaborate than was seen at other sites. Are there lessons to be learned and disseminated here?
4. There were problems with design of the guard station at the entrance to Punta Allen. Visitor information functions should be provided on the ground level and separated from living quarters and office space.
5. Within the reserve, working with Mayan communities has evolved from implementing isolated economic activities to working within a collaborative framework that facilitates the strengthening of traditional Mayan values. This experience should be documented and shared.
6. The reasons given for the lack of women in various projects and management activities of the reserve included the following:
 - the prevalence of "machismo";
 - women stay in the home with their husbands;
 - there is jealousy if a local woman is hired as an extension agent; and
 - women do not want to attend training activities.
7. A strategy to overcome these obstacles to women's participation needs to be developed. It was clear that the women in the Reserve understood the natural resources around them (e.g., medicinal plants) and were eager to participate in training (e.g., ecotourism). Gender analysis is a proven conservation tool when used in conjunction with other participatory methods. It should be used.

8. The reserve's philosophy is to work with communities using collaborative processes and assessing needs with a long-term view—clearly a successful approach. It is often in conflict with the demands of donors for specific, short-term goals. The success of such collaborative efforts in conservation are now being documented so that the process, itself, can be sold to donors.

9. Sian Ka'an has good examples of environmental education used with leaders, policy makers, schools and the community at large. These efforts should be shared in a systematic way.

10. Local participation in the management of the Reserve has included collaborative research on lobster traps, monitoring of turtles by tourists, and economic activities that build on the park resources (e.g., the training of ecotourism guides and a store in Cancun selling products from the reserve). Research has been fed back to the communities. This participation has contributed to community support for the reserve.

After five years of PiP Program support, this site benefits from a diversified short- and long-term funding scheme that is a good model worth disseminating. As in the other two Mexican sites visited, Sian Ka'an has the benefit of having basic reserve personnel salaries covered by fiscal resources from the federal budget. It is also one of the ten Mexican protected areas that has its own endowment (approx. US\$1.3 million) through the GEF-FANP-FMCN protected areas program. This means that the reserve will receive around US\$120 000 per year for an extended period starting in 1998. This site benefits also from the support of a strong NGO that carries on a substantial environmental policy program to deal with strong pressures from the private and government sectors to develop the coastal zone of Mexico's only Caribbean shore.

Machalilla

Machalilla National Park was established in 1979 with an area of 46,000 ha of cloud forest, dry forest, coastal scrub, and marine areas that include two offshore islands and rocky islets. Numerous cultural sites are located within the park, some of them including evidence of human habitation in the area going back 5,000 years. Management is carried out by the Instituto Ecuatoriano Forestal y de Áreas Naturales y Vida Silvestre (INEFAN) with the collaboration of Fundacion Natura, Ecuador's largest conservation nonprofit organization, and has been supported by the PiP Program since 1992. There are several communities within the park's boundaries, and over the years INEFAN and Natura have developed a cooperative relationship with them through community outreach efforts (which have included environmental education and small-scale development projects). Major threats to the area include deforestation, erosion, loss of wildlife, uncontrolled tourism development, and overfishing.

Observations

1. As a result of El Niño, which had a severe impact on the park, emergency funding is required for the repair of facilities (visitor center, overlooks, trails) that appeared to be well designed and

constructed. In the meantime, it is important that park personnel give priority to interim repairs to reduce further damage and secure building materials.

2. Flooding has significantly impacted the communities within and surrounding the park. Are there opportunities here for emergency funding for public works projects related to the development of the park (trails, overlooks, other visitor centers, new guard posts, entrance stations, new or improved exhibits, public information, educational materials, or other?).

3. The administrative structure of INEFAN impedes a smooth flow of communications between the field personnel of protected areas and the protected areas unit at headquarters.

4. There appears to be no provision for a career ladder for park personnel in INEFAN. Is this something that USAID might seek to discuss with government in partnership with other donors?

5. Collaborative processes in working with the communities within the park have served to change attitudes from opposition to the park to acceptance. The communities outside of the park are more of a problem. The success of such processes is reflected in the working patterns of the park personnel, who have gone from an original philosophy of policing to one of community participation in planning for the park's future.

6. The interpretation center provides a space for public meetings and a means to keep the Park image central in the area, a good strategy for public relations.

7. Economic activities should be closely wed to conservation and, simultaneously, to business principles. For example, the raising of chickens by a women's group in a park community or the making of tagua handicrafts should be evaluated regarding (a) their relationship to conservation and (b) whether they fill a niche, add value, and are market based.

8. There have been a variety of community-based projects, in Aguas Blancas, for example, but few lessons learned on their success or failure have been captured. Such lessons, based on systematic, collaborative monitoring and evaluation should be a core part of the learning center's emphasis at this site.

9. Environmental education is two pronged. It involves (a) direct education (e.g., working with student clubs and using community members to help with managing natural resources) and (b) public relations (e.g., providing shortwave radios to some of the park communities to help monitoring programs, and provide communication for the community). This is a model to be considered with other PIP Program sites. Priority should be given to "translate" some of the excellent technical CDC materials for public consumption.

10. The USAID mission has a gender committee, which meets regularly with representatives for each of the mission's strategic objectives and is composed of a mix of men and women. This committee should support the nascent work with gender at the PIP Program site, especially in encour-

aging the development of a rationale on the importance of gender to conservation and the documentation of lessons learned in the field.

Five years of technical and economical support from the PiP Program have not been enough to attain financial self-sufficiency for management of the site. A draft financial plan for the park has been completed identifying mostly short-term sources of recurrent funding and some sources for specific projects within the park and its buffer zone. The income generation opportunity from nature and adventure tourism will have to be postponed for at least one or two years due to the severe damage the 1997–98 EL Niño has inflicted on the park's infrastructure. A full-time person dedicated to fundraising for the park should be hired by Fundación Natura. The possibility of financing the fund-raising efforts through a grant from a third source with matching funds from TNC was discussed.

Bahuaja Sonene

Bahuaja Sonene National Park, created only in 1996, includes 300,000 ha of humid subtropical forest, wetlands, and humid subtropical savannahs. Since 1983, the 8,000 hectares of savannah had been protected in the Pampas del Heath National Sanctuary, which from 1990 was supported by the PiP Program. The National Institute of Natural Resources (INRENA) manages the area with the support of PRO NATURALEZA, one of Peru's largest nonprofit conservation organizations. The park is uninhabited but is part of the territory of the Ese'ejas Indigenous Group. Threats to the area include poaching and uncontrolled tourism.

Observations

1. The highly qualified, and well-trained staff members are enthusiastic and dedicated, but the personnel policies of INRENA cause instability and disruptions. This would seem to be a policy issue that might lend itself to interventions by USAID and other donors at the highest government levels.
2. There is a need to work with GTZ in encouraging the development of career ladders for protected areas personnel working within INRENA. This might also be an area where intervention by USAID in concert with other donors might be useful.
3. Relations between the central office of INRENA and the PiP Program (USAID, TNC, and FPCN) seem to be strained. A combined strategy for improving relations seems warranted.
4. The poor siting of the San Antonio guard post and camp, at the outer extreme of a bend in the river, means it will have to be moved within a few years time. Erosion is a serious problem.
5. Given the increased size of the protected area, longer financing to achieve the PiP Program objectives for the area seems warranted, at least to bridge the period until finance expected from the Dutch comes on line.

6. The park's guards seemed to be exceptionally well trained in natural history and in guide skills. With the expansion of the park, the guards have had to deal more with local people and with conflict. Training in negotiation and conflict resolution may be helpful.
7. Community outreach is directly tied to reducing threats to conservation, for example park personnel have collaborated with those who extract the Brazil nut to assure the extraction is sustainable and done in a way as to not damage the forest. Environmental education is also directly tied to conservation within the park, for example with posters specifically about Pampas del Heath. Such ties provide a clear-cut focus for community work that is a good model.
8. The obvious presence of women as former park directors, park rangers, community health workers, and volunteer park rangers serves to dispel the all too common idea that protected areas are too remote to attract female professionals. This would make a valuable case study for a national and international audience.
9. Collaborative processes have garnered local support for the park (e.g., a local union that represents campesinos). It is, therefore, unfortunate that such local involvement was not used by the Mobile Oil Corporation to earn the goodwill of the communities as it begins to drill for oil in the reserved area surrounding the park.
10. There is a need to assure the participation of local people in ecotourism, especially as guides. Certainly the local guides with the PIP Program evaluation team not only knew the natural history of the area but also provided meals up to international standards.
11. This site has received support from the PiP Program since 1991. At the time of the evaluation the local NGO (Pro Naturaleza) has completed a strategy for operational sustainability and the site has completed a draft financial plan that identifies recurrent funding sources. Yet the park is far from having reached financial sustainability, one of the main reasons being that the original PiP Program site (Pampas del Heath Sanctuary) was expanded to the much larger Bahuaja Sonene National Park. The biodiversity of the site is as abundant as at other protected areas that compete for specialized tourism, and this should be kept in mind when considering this as an income generation opportunity.
12. At this time there are other donors and sources of technical support that play an important role, as is the case of the Netherlands government and GTZ. Timing has been less than ideal, however, putting an unnecessary stress on the park personnel.
13. The opportunity of tapping Mobil Oil Corporation as a significant donor for this park should be explored jointly with TNC. At this moment all that has been obtained from this company is support for the training of twenty rural teachers.
14. As PROFONANPE, the national protected areas fund, consolidates its position as one of the strongest funds in the region, it will play an increasingly important role in developing financial

support for the park.

Talamanca

The Talamanca-Caribbean Biological Corridor of Costa Rica is not a legally protected area. Rather it is a land-management initiative designed to experiment with innovative conservation strategies for privately and indigenously held lands in a corridor between the mountainous La Amistad Biosphere Reserve and the coastal Gandoca-Manzanillo Wildlife Refuge. The initiative was added to the PiP Program in 1995. It is administered by a commission representing the Ministry of Natural Resources, Energy, and Mining (MIRENEM); ten local associations of private landowners; and two groups of indigenous groups. Threats to the corridor include illegal logging, uncontrolled tourism, expansion of the banana industry, and small- and medium-scale agriculture. Community involvement in the project is widespread through the commission, and activities such as a community-controlled land trust, conservation easements, and community sustainable resource-use projects.

Observations

1. The specific conservation objectives of the project need to be more clearly specified.
2. Is maintenance of vegetative cover the only measure of success? How will the project determine that acceptable levels of biodiversity and ecological processes have been maintained, or that genetic flows between populations of endangered species have been guaranteed?
3. The management plan for Gandoca-Manzanillo Wildlife Refuge seems inapplicable considering current staffing levels and finance.
4. The switch from a legal approach to deforestation (fining those that transgress) to a market approach (paying farmers for maintaining forest cover and managing forest lands) is an innovative strategy that would lend itself to a case study and subsequent dissemination of lessons learned.
5. It would be irresponsible for TNC/USAID to not "stay the course" on this very interesting and important experiment, which can serve as a laboratory for regional efforts and other corridors (e.g., the Mesoamerican Corridor). However, to get more out of the experiment, it would be useful to be more specific about the hypotheses that are being tested.
6. The partner, in this case, is a confederation of local associations that are working collaboratively with local communities on issues linking conservation with education, economic development, legal aid, and so forth. This is a model to be considered by other regional efforts, especially when the protected area has a high percentage of privately owned lands.
7. This site is on the cutting edge of conservation efforts carried out within an often densely populated regional corridor. Therefore, sharing the lessons learned is critical. The case study being de-

veloped on the corridor by TNC should be given top priority and should include:

- the coalition building at this site—within the confederation, with other NGOs, with MINAE, with indigenous and other local communities, and with women;
- the institution-building processes of the confederation members, through training in strategic planning, accounting, and the training of the board of directors;
- the collaborative process that encouraged the support of the indigenous communities;
- local decision-making in conservation management (e.g., the “comites zonales”);
- the economic activities that are tied to conservation, yet seem to follow sound business principles (e.g., protection of turtles in Gandoca, and the extraction of wood in San Miguel);
- attention to the gender dimensions of the site, and the incorporation of data, disaggregated by sex, into monitoring programs; and,
- the attempts at monitoring and evaluation of both the biological processes of the corridor, and its social dimensions.

8. This is one of the youngest PiP Program sites, having started in 1995, yet consolidation is scheduled for 1998. After three years, the financial plan for self-sufficiency is just underway, and some sources of funding have been identified. At the time of the evaluation, the site had funding for two or three months of operation (approximately US\$40,000), and no other immediate funding is available. This is clearly a critical situation, and it would seem important that PiP Program funding be continued until greater progress has been made toward financial self-sufficiency.

Sierra de las Minas

Sierra de las Minas is a 236,300 ha biosphere reserve in Guatemala, administered by the nongovernmental foundation Defensores de la Naturaleza, with oversight of the Government’s National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP). The reserve was decreed in 1990, became a PiP Program site in 1991, and was included in the international network of biosphere reserves in 1993. The reserve covers an isolated and rugged area of mountains that include cloud forest, wet and very wet subtropical forest, and high-diversity conifer and dry, thorny subtropical forests. Major threats to the area include the weakness of governmental institutions and the conversion of forest to agriculture. Defensores de la Naturaleza has a large and active program to work with communities in and around the reserve in environmental education, ecotourism, sustainable agriculture, forest resource use, and nascent integration of women into development programs.

Observations

1. This is the most advanced protected area visited during the evaluation in terms of management programs, community outreach, and finance.
2. Important issues apparently need to be resolved related to supervision of the park guards

provided by CONAP and their integration into site management.

3. The recreational opportunities of the core zone did not seem to be adequately recognized, nor were strategies for their utilization clear.
4. Policies regarding public access and relevant signs (“Private property – No trespassing without prior permission”) within the reserve did not seem to be congruent. Clear and consistent policy is required so that personnel can be trained and infrastructure planned and provided accordingly.
5. Is an annual budget of US\$800,000 per year for reserve management sustainable in the long run?
6. Perhaps Guatemala’s “Fondo de Inversión Social” and community development organizations could be tapped to provide some of the funding and expertise for community work.
7. This is a post-conflict environment, a transitional period from war to a democratic state. Therefore, the PIP Program participatory processes at a local level not only promote conservation and support for the reserve but are vital in reestablishing social organization. USAID and other donors working with democracy and governance issues need to collaborate with the environment sector as both can learn from and support the other.
8. The war and its aftermath have opened opportunities for women, widows, indigenous people and other marginalized groups in national policy and within the broader society. The focus on these groups should play a role in support of the Reserve and conservation in general.
9. Reserve personnel will soon include a woman who will focus on community participation and gender, using gender analysis in understanding communities and as a tool for conservation. The reserve will also internally examine its institutional approach to gender and conservation. This experience should be documented and shared with others as a core learning center activity, if possible supported by Balancing Theme funds.
10. There are lessons to be learned from a women’s group that the team visited, which lives close to the reserve. The group has tried a variety of income-generating activities over the years. The history of these activities, written as a brief case study, would be instructive as a training tool, linking conservation, work with women, and small business development.
11. Participatory planning has engaged communities and other NGOs in the decision-making of the reserve. For example, planning workshops have included local people, reserve personnel, mayors, academics, extension, and municipal personnel. Support for the reserve has thus been increased.
12. The reserve has experience that could increase the utility of the human ecological profile (HEP). For example, it has suggested that socioeconomic studies should be directed to a specific conservation goal (e.g., understanding community organization to better facilitate environmental education).

13. This site has received support from the PiP Program since 1991. Together with Sian Ka'an, it is one of the few examples of a consolidated site that has a very close relationship with a large partner NGO (Defensores de la Naturaleza). This NGO has completed a strategy for operational and financial sustainability and has begun implementation including the capitalization of its own endowment. The site, which is under management by the NGO (by congressional decree), has a long-term financial plan near completion with recurrent sources and mechanisms of funding identified. This site should look for more participation from the government and the international recognition of the area through UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Program.