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**Forests of the Lower Mekong Annual
Report
10/01/2007 - 09/30/2008**

for

World Wildlife Fund

September 30, 2008
Submitted by:
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ADB	Asian Development Bank
AIT	Asian Institute of Technology
ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations
ARD	Acid Rock Drainage
BCI	Biodiversity Corridors Initiative of the Asian Development Bank
CAN	Conservation Action Network
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBNRM	Community Based Natural Resource Management
CET	Commune Extension Team
CIFOR	Center for International Forestry Research
CPA	Community Protected Area
CR	Community Representative
CRES	Center for Research and Environmental Studies
DARD	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (Vietnam)
EC	European Commission
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
EVN	Electricity of Viet Nam
FA	Forestry Administration (MAFF, Cambodia)
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
FiA	Fisheries Administration
FFI	Flora and Fauna International
FPD	Forest Protection Department
GMP	Greater Mekong Programme of the World Wildlife Fund
GMS	Greater Mekong Subregion Programme of the Asian Development Bank
HUAF	Hue University of Agriculture and Forestry
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
IPC	International Policy Committee
IRMA	Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
LMDFE	Lower Mekong Dry Forests Ecoregion
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (Vietnam, Cambodia)
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MOE	Ministry of Environment, Cambodia
MoE	Ministry of the Environment, Vietnam
MOM	Management Orientation Monitoring System
MONRE	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (Vietnam)
MOSAIC	Management of Strategic Areas for Integrated Conservation
MPF	Mondulkiri Protected Forest
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Study and Action Plan
NRM	Natural Resources Management
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Products
PA	Protected Area
PCPU	Provincial Conservation Planning Unit
PES	Payment for Environmental Services
PLUP	Participatory Land Use Planning

PPC	Provincial People's Committee
PPWS	Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuary
PRA	Participatory Rapid Appraisal
PRDC	Provincial Rural Development Committee
RECOFTC	Regional Community Forest Training Center for Asia
REDD	Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation
RGoC	Royal Government of Cambodia
SEA	Socio-economic Assessment
SNV	Netherlands Development Organization
SWAP	Srepok Wilderness Area Project
TFF	Trust Fund for Forests
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
VFTN	Vietnam Forest and Trade Network
VPT	Village Protection Team
VTV	Vietnam Television
WB	World Bank
WCS	Wildlife Conservation Society
WEMB	Wildlife Ecotourism Management Board
WGE	Working Group on Environment
WTO	World Trade Organization

Forests of the Lower Mekong

Project Overview

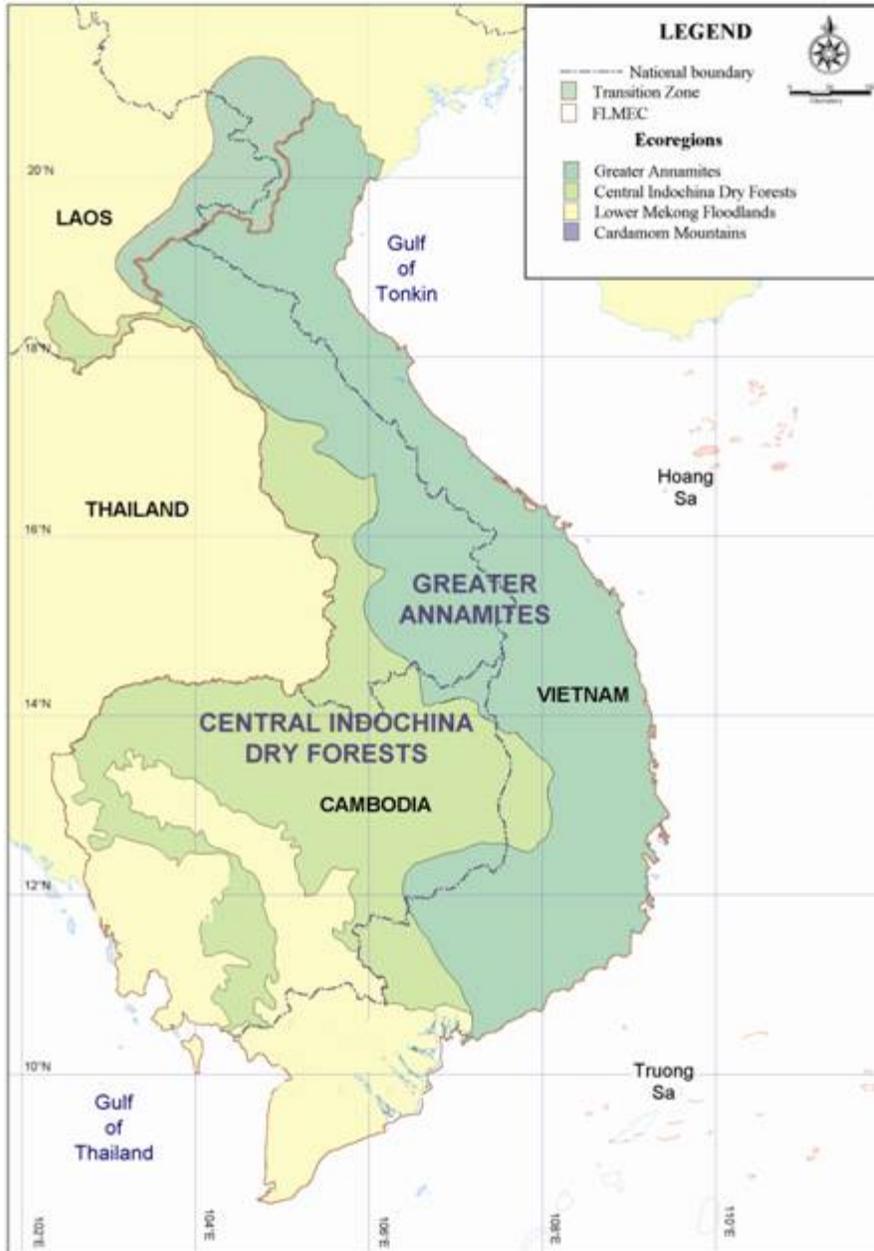
Description of Site

The Forests of the Lower Mekong refers to an ecoregion complex consisting of the Greater Annamites, the Central Lower Mekong Dry Forests, the Lower Mekong Floodlands and the Cardamom Mountains. All four of these are Global 200 ecoregions comprising an incredibly high diversity of habitats including deciduous dipterocarp forests, moist evergreen forests, karst limestone forests, open grasslands and savannas, upland plateaus, wetlands, and pristine riparian environments. WWF Greater Mekong Programme¹ focuses on two of these forest ecoregions as key priorities, the Greater Annamites and the Central Lower Mekong Dry Forests, both of which support diverse, abundant, and rare wildlife. A remarkable indication of the unique status of these ecoregions is the fact that six new mammal species—the saola, large-antlered muntjac, Roosevelt’s muntjac, Annamite muntjac, grey-shanked douc and the Annamite striped rabbit—have been described in the Greater Annamites ecoregion alone within the last ten years.

These ecoregions are home to other mammal species of global conservation significance. These include the kouprey, Javan rhinoceros, tiger, Asian elephant, and douc and Francois’ langurs. The region also contains important bird species, such as Edward’s pheasant, sarus crane, giant ibis, and white-shouldered ibis, as well as myriad species of reptiles (such as the Siamese crocodile—the rarest crocodile in the world), amphibians, fish, invertebrates, and plants. The aquatic biodiversity of the region is outstanding, with over 1300 species of fish catalogued so far, and recognized as the second most diverse river system in the world. The forests and associated ecosystems also have significant watershed value with westward drainages flowing into the lower Mekong basin, and eastern drainages flowing through Vietnam into the South China Sea.

The Forests of the Lower Mekong are home to hundreds of thousands of upland and lowland human communities who have cultivated the lands, utilized the water resources, and subsisted – from the forest products for hundreds of years. In both Cambodia and Vietnam, minority peoples—many of whom practice shifting cultivation—live mainly in the upland areas. The majority of ethnic groups in each country are traditionally lowland wet rice cultivators, though migration into the less densely populated uplands is occurring in some areas, most notably the central highlands of Vietnam.

¹ The WWF Greater Mekong Programme came together last year with the merging of the WWF Indochina Program Office and WWF Thailand Country Office. The headquarters is based in Hanoi with country offices in each of the lower Mekong countries - Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam - and staff based in Yunnan Province, China.



Threats

- Commercial and unregulated logging is reducing primary and secondary forest cover.
- Hunting for local consumption—food, medicine and curio appeal—and for the wildlife trade is seriously impacting a wide range of species, and is exacerbated by increased human activities and shrinking habitat.
- Illegal trade in wildlife products, timber, and non-timber forest products (NTFPs) is increasing because of market demand, widening income disparities between rural and urban areas, and inefficient law enforcement.
- Habitat loss and fragmentation, primarily through land conversion for agriculture and logging, is creating increased pressure on many forest species.
- Commercialization of agriculture and a transition away from subsistence farming is decreasing the sustainability of land use practices and leading to agricultural expansion.

- Infrastructure development, such as proposed hydroelectric schemes and irrigation projects (which have the potential to flood habitat, change drainage patterns, and alter fisheries) and road construction, are opening access to natural resources in remote areas.
- Gold mining is responsible for direct destruction of natural habitat, while the associated processing of ore causes water and soil pollution that kills wildlife, degrades or destroys aquatic habitat, and poisons local people. These extractive industries also encourage in-migration that alters economic and social relationships, usually to the detriment of sustainable customary resource management systems.

These threats are all exacerbated by increasing population pressure, the resource demands of industrializing societies, uncoordinated policies and regulations, and more recently, an economic downturn that has drained government coffers and decreased family livelihood options.

Strategic Goals and Objectives

Increasing cooperation within the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS), the regional economic plan designed by the Asian Development Bank, continues to drive national development strategies, the impact of which is increasingly more evident in the significant growth in regional investment in the agriculture, minerals, energy, and infrastructure sectors. The GMS is promoting economic activity and associated investments in infrastructure development, to be concentrated along three “economic corridors” that crisscross the subregion (from Mawlamyine, Myanmar to Da Nang, Vietnam; from Kunming, China to Bangkok, Thailand; and from Bangkok, Thailand to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam). Recognizing the potential negative impacts of economic corridor development on biodiversity and natural resources, the GMS has also established a Working Group on Environment (WGE), comprised principally of senior government officials from environment and natural resource ministries. WWF is also a participant in the WGE.

In FY08, WWF Greater Mekong Programme responded to the emergence of regional threats and opportunities posed by GMS, by developing strategies for responses at the same regional scale, addressing mainly the issues of Infrastructure, Agriculture, Timber Trade and Wildlife Trade. In addition, we have added strategies to address Climate Change and Mining – key drivers of biodiversity loss in the region. The overall goal of WWF’s Greater Mekong Program (GMP) remains unchanged: *to conserve and sustainably manage biodiversity and natural resources of the Mekong region in order to ensure ecological integrity, to protect the natural assets base for the poor, and as a basis for poverty alleviation.* WWF GMP pursues a twofold strategy: site level interventions address threats that are specific to the two countries (Vietnam and Cambodia) and interventions that address threats comprehensively at a regional scale. At the site level, threats are primarily driven by poverty and lack of enforcement. At the regional level, the threats are primarily driven by unsustainable and environmentally damaging economic development plans or market forces, exacerbated by conflict and lack of coordination among various institutions.

The key objective of the GMP at the regional level is to transform the region’s most dominant forces threatening biodiversity in the Mekong, towards more sustainable and healthier trends. This will be achieved through international cooperation on illegal wildlife trade, regional coordination on infrastructure and hydropower planning, regional promotion of payment for environment services, and capacity building for environmental leadership. Initiatives include:

- Economic valuation of environmental services as a tool to influence resource use decision-making;
- Regional agreements and collaboration on international timber trade and wildlife trade;
- EIA adherence (coordination in dam planning and implementation, preventing migration);
- Coordination in GMS planning and construction of roads and dams.

At the site level, GMP pursues the following objectives:

- Community based forest and freshwater management;
- Integrated river basin management;
- Reforestation;
- Reduction of poaching and prevention of illegal wildlife trade;
- Community development and empowerment;
- Improved enforcement and governance.

The main sites are Quang Nam and Thua Thien Hue Provinces of Central Vietnam (Greater Annamites Ecoregion) and Mondulkiri Province in Cambodia (Dry Forests Ecoregion).

I. Greater Annamites

Collaborators/Partners

Government of Vietnam

- Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment (MONRE)
- Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD)
- Electricity of Vietnam (EVN)
- Provincial People's Committees (PPCs) of Quang Nam, Hue, Quang Tri and Lam Dong
- Forest Protection Departments at the province level (FPDs)

Business

- The Coca Cola Company
- MARS
- CARGIL
- OLAM
- Hai's Café

Educational Institutions

- Asian Institute of Technology (AIT)
- Hue University of Agriculture and Forestry (HUAF)
- Vietnam National University
- Center for Research and Environmental Studies (CRES)

International Organizations

- World Bank (WB)
- Asian Development Bank (ADB)
- SNV Netherlands Development Organization

International NGOs

- International Policy Committee (IPC)
- Winrock International
- International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN)
- Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR)
- Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)
- WildAid
- BirdLife
- CORRIN
- TRAFFIC
- Center for Research and Environmental Studies (CRES)

SUMMARY: Period 10/01/07-09/30/08*Greater Annamites Highlights*

- Key next steps have been taken to implement the two new protected areas (Saola Nature Reserve in Thua Thien Hue province and Saola Landscape in Quang Nam province) and a 13,500-hectare extension to Bach Ma National Park, which directly contribute to saola conservation. These steps include the development of a management plan for the Bach Ma extension and feasibility studies for establishment of the new saola reserves.
- Online actions of WWF US (CAN) and WWF International (Panda passport) have collected more than 26,000 signatures from citizens of more than 150 countries in support of saola protection.
- Law enforcement to deter wildlife trade has been strengthened, including training forest rangers in Thua Thien Hue and Quang Nam provinces in enforcement, mapping, forest restoration and awareness raising techniques. As a result, in Hue wildlife trade violations decreased by around 30% in 2007.
- The first ever forest use rights certificate will be issued in Vietnam following MARD's issue of Circular 38/2007/TT-BNN "Guidelines for legal procedures of forest allocating, forest hiring, and forest withdrawing to apply to organizations, households, individuals, village communities" (expected for September 2008).
- In partnership with the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE), the Centre for Biodiversity Conservation of the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), the Vietnam National University of Hanoi and Vinh University. WWF has further developed a method for determining a baseline for monitoring saola.
- Communication outputs this year include: a cover story in the *Heritage* magazine, a BBC World Service Radio programme on the Central Annamites, broad media coverage on the announcement by Chairman of the Quang Nam Provincial Peoples Committee that the province will critically review its plans for hydropower development.

Results by Objective and Activity**Objective I.1: Protect, restore, and sustainably manage biodiversity elements of high scientific and economic value in the ecoregion****Activity I.1.1.: Protect key species****Strengthen law enforcement for saola protection in the newly established protected area through direct grants to the Forest Protection Department and National Park staff in Thua Thien Hue province**

A new ranger station has been built in the extension of Bach Ma National Park and, with support from this grant, has been equipped with GPS, exhibition facilities and a meeting room in the traditional community house. A puppet show has been practiced and performed for school

children. A training needs assessment conducted with secondary school teachers, served as a basis for educational materials that were prepared and trainings conducted.

Increase the presence of law enforcement officials to reduce hunting pressure

Ranger patrol trainings have been conducted and patrolling in the new protected areas has started. For the two new saola reserves, discussions on setting up management boards for the protected areas are ongoing with the provincial authorities.

Establish a monitoring programme for the saola to identify threats and mitigation measures in partnership with provincial, district and community stakeholders



Photograph: Training of local people in camera-trapping for saola. © Nicholas Wilkinson/WWF Greater Mekong Programme

Training programmes were conducted, in collaboration with the American Museum of Natural History and Vinh University (Vietnam), for local people in three communes in the area to place and operate film-based camera traps. In addition, 10 digital camera traps were set in a remote area where saola were deemed likely to be found. So far, no photos of saola have been taken, a result largely attributable to the failure of film camera traps in the highly challenging environment. Only the ten digital cameras have been functioning effectively. Further work is needed to develop a reliable monitoring method for saola.

Since basic information on saola distribution is urgently needed, an interview method based on participatory mapping was developed at district level workshops held in April 2008 in Nam Dong, and again in May in A Luói. In July, an in-depth village-level study was also conducted in Nam Dong district in collaboration with an expert on Katu culture from the University of Uppsala in Sweden, with support from Conservation International, the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology and CRES. These methods showed promise in uncovering local perceptions of the distribution of animals, including saola, as well as threats to these animals. If expanded, these



Photo: Workshops with villagers on the saola and its distribution. © Nicholas Wilkinson/WWF Greater Mekong Programme

In A Luoi district 8 meetings with villagers were organized by FPD to raise the awareness about the saola and enhance cooperation with the local people. In total, 240 villagers participated in the meetings.

A campaign has been initiated to deal with the issue that many restaurants in Thua Thien Hue province sell illegal wildlife products. Based on an action plan which has been elaborated jointly with stakeholders, ‘hotspots’ of trading illegal wildlife in the province were investigated regularly (data will be fed into law enforcement database – see below). Fifteen meetings took place with restaurants selling wildlife products to inform the owners of the relevant laws and convince them to sign anti-wildlife commitments. A cooperation network has been established between FPD and Environment Police to allow for more efficient monitoring of illegal wildlife trade and prosecution.

Development and testing of the law enforcement database is ongoing. It is expected that the pilot will be finalized later in 2008. Once successfully tested, it will be implemented in Quang Nam and Quang Tri provinces. The database will include patrol efforts, felled tree encounter rates, hunter encounter rates. BCI will fund patrols, data collection and review of threats in Quang Nam and Quang Tri provinces. Based on the analysis of this information, management plans will be revised and training on adaptive management and enforcement planning will be implemented.

As a result of the combined efforts (see also activity I.1.2), wildlife trade violations in Hue province decreased by around 30% in 2007.

Activity I.1.2. Protect key sites

Assist Bach Ma National Park, Quang Nam Forest Protection Department (FPD) and Thua Thien FPD with the development of management plans for Bach Ma National Park including its new extension, and for the two new protected areas

A management plan has been developed for the Bach Ma National Park and its 13,500-hectare extension, and feasibility studies have been conducted for the establishment of the new saola

reserves (Saola Nature Reserve in Thua Thien Hue province and Saola Landscape in Quang Nam province). These directly contribute to saola conservation. .

Support provincial agencies in the effective implementation of the ‘Saola Sanctuary’ in Thue Thien Hue province through awareness raising, enforcement, development of staff capacity and establishing with local communities Community Forestry Management agreements defining the boundaries.

To raise the awareness of communities around the new saola reserves, a drawing contest was conducted with school children. Four hundred students participated in the competition, and five prizes were awarded for the “best picture” depicting the importance of conservation of forest and wildlife, and the need to protect the saola.

WWF and FPD are currently developing an investment plan for the Quang Nam portion of the Ngoc Linh Nature Reserve (NR) which will be submitted to the Provincial People Committee and MARD for approval. With this approval Ngoc Linh NR and its management board can be officially established. The NR is part of the wider protected area network around the saola landscape.

In a joint workshop with WWF, the provincial Government of Quang Nam has agreed to establish biodiversity corridors to connect the protected areas Saola sanctuary, Song Thanh NR, Ngoc Linh NR, Elephant and grey douc langur sanctuary and to link with other protected areas in neighboring Thua Thien Hue province.

Under the BCI project, WWF and FPD conducted a rapid assessment of a selection of existing Village Protection Teams (VPT) in Quang Nam in order to determine:

1. Under what conditions are VPTs effective or ineffective?
2. What external support is required for effective VPTs?
3. How can the VPT establishment or management process be improved?

Based on this assessment, FPD and WWF are currently establishing new VPTs in 24 other communes and are providing continued support to VPTs by channeling funds through the Community Development Funds.

The first ever forest use rights certificate will be issued in Vietnam following the formal issue of Circular 38/2007/TT-BNN by MARD about “Guidelines for legal procedures of forest allocating, forest hiring, forest withdrawing to apply to organizations, households, individuals, village communities” (expected for September 2008).

Objective I.2. Mitigate the most urgent, broad scale pressures on biodiversity in the ecoregion

Activity I.2.1: Address immediate and apparent threats to biodiversity at the national and regional levels in the Greater Annamites

Address the growing threat of both small scale and large scale mining through the development of a WWF mining strategy and activity plan for the Annamites, including discussions with stakeholders

A draft zoning plan for mining areas has been prepared by the provincial branch of MONRE in Quang Nam and will be finalised over the next few months. WWF also envisages a survey of the environmental impacts of gold mining in Quang Nam province, in particular of the larger legal mining concessions.

In addition, an assessment of the current mining situation in the Mekong Region and a strategy for consideration for future work in the area were developed. Please see section III for more details of this assessment and strategy.

In conjunction with the mining assessment, several maps of current infrastructure and mining developments were developed for the Greater Mekong Subregion. WWF has been mapping existing and planned mining sites in parts of the Greater Annamites to contribute to the development of a strategy on mining. WWF is currently discussing a partnership with a leading international mining company.

Work to improve agricultural practices

WWF was strongly involved in the development of an Action Plan for cocoa development in Vietnam, signed by the Vietnamese and Dutch governments in October 2007. WWF has played a major role in advancing environmental sustainability issues throughout these discussions; and obtained an official commitment from the government not to encourage cocoa planting on any newly cleared land. In January, Vietnam's Ministry of Agriculture invited WWF to be an official member of the Working Group for cocoa development, formed to implement the action plan to be signed by the two governments.

The WWF cocoa pilot project in Phuoc Loc has been continuing in the Southern Annamites, close to Cat Tien National Park. The project is well received by local farmers and district Government officials and making good progress with a 92% survival rate of cocoa plants after one year, but a funding gap emerged regarding the biodiversity monitoring covered through this grant. The biodiversity surveys are an essential part of the project to indicate impacts the cocoa production has on the environment and biodiversity as well as to advise on immediate recommendations for the project implementation. The monitoring takes place every 6 months for the duration of 3 years starting from April 2007.

The recent monitoring survey in July 2008 has revealed that botanical composition within the cocoa plot remains stable. Regarding fauna, compared to the monitoring survey of December 2007, there is an increase in the number of individuals and species of reptiles, amphibians, and fish. However, the reason for this is the rainy season (July to November) when these species are more active since it is their reproductive season. The number of bird individuals has doubled, but it is too pre-mature to draw final conclusions on the reasons behind this. An explanation might be that the cocoa plot provides for a more stable bird habitat.



Farmers are being trained in planting cocoa under the tree canopy.

A new 3-year agro-forestry project in the buffer zone of Cat Tien National Park, Southern Annamites (Cat Tien district, Lam Dong province), started in May. Key project activities include land use planning for the buffer zone and introducing best management practices for cashew and cocoa production, with the aim to conserve the biologically most valuable degraded natural forests (corridors, forests adjacent to the national park) and prevent their conversion for agriculture. Through this project the pilot work on cocoa implemented in Phuoc Loc (see above) will be extended.

Last year discussions were ongoing with the Mars company on establishing a partnership to support the company to introduce best management practices for its commodities, e.g. cocoa. Due to restructuring at Mars; however, there was a change in focus and staffing at Mars. Consequently, discussions are not moving ahead for the time being.

Objective I.3: Harness local, national, and international support for long-term conservation of the ecoregion

Activity I.3.1: Extend capacity to mobilize and manage large-scale conservation

Further develop WWF's presence in the Southern Annamites and replicate successful approaches pioneered in the Central Annamites

WWF has been successful in further developing its presence in the Southern Annamites. The two WWF offices in Bien Hoa and Bi Doup Nui Ba National Park are now well established. The new WWF staff on the ground have been instrumental in establishing trust and relationships with key stakeholders in the landscape and have been the 'door opener' to tackle additional issues like tourism and cashew production. This process of scaling up is ongoing.

Produce a five year WWF strategic action plan for the Southern Annamites

Instead of developing an overall strategic action plan for the Southern Annamites, WWF together with partners decided to focus the action plan on tourism as an emerging issue. In November 2007, the Vietnamese Government issued a decree which now allows so-called eco-tourism development in National Parks and other Protected Areas. While this can be an opportunity to generate additional income for Protected Areas (Payment for Environmental Services) and can support the local communities with livelihood alternatives to poaching in the parks, tourism is also a significant threat. Currently, clear definitions and guidelines for ‘eco-tourism’ as well as sustainable investment plans are lacking. As a consequence, Park administrations are approached by all kinds of investment companies who want to set up tourism infrastructure even in the core zones, with potentially severe negative impacts. To tackle this issue WWF conducted two stakeholder workshops in Cat Tien and Bi Dup Nui Ba National Park (Lam Dong province) in April 2008. Park staff, Government officials, tourism investors and other NGOs were present to discuss the challenges and opportunities of tourism in the Protected Areas. Based on these discussions and recommendations from the workshop, a tourism strategy has been developed for the Southern Annamites, including a component addressing the issue at a national level.

Develop a priority species protection action plan for the Southern Annamites

The development of the priority species protection action plan is delayed. This is due to the delay in completing the baseline species surveys which form the basis for the action plan, in particular for tigers and gibbons. Thus the next step is to establish these baselines and monitoring system for tigers and gibbons in the Southern Annamites landscape. Based on these, the priority species protection action plan will be developed at a later stage.

Carry out biodiversity surveys in Vinh Cuu Nature Reserve, adjacent to Cat Tien National Park, expected to be home to a range of rare and endangered species similar to Cat Tien

A biodiversity survey in Vinh Cuu Nature Reserve has been carried out, although other resources were available and WWF involvement was not necessary. Instead, WWF supported a biodiversity monitoring survey of the cocoa agro-forestry plot in Da Huoai, Lam Dong province (close to Madaguri village). Please refer to ‘Activity I.2.1’ for more information.

Activity I.3.2: Engage broader stakeholder support through advocacy-based communications in the Greater Annamites

The Global Conservation Program has particularly supported WWF’s overall media work in the Central Annamites. However, although WWF highlighted the USAID support in information released to the BBC, the BBC World Service Radio Programme on the Central Annamites broadcast at the beginning of 2008 did not specifically mention USAID.

Broadcast on national television the work under the Green Corridor project in the Hue province

A film on WWF’s work in the Green Corridor project was broadcast on national TV.

The discovery of several new species in Hue, as part of the Green Corridor project, was published at the end of September 2007 and resulted in global media coverage².

An international press release to acknowledge the work done by Quang Nam and Thua Thien Hue provinces in creating an east-west corridor that will protect the saola landscape, was issued at the end of September 2007 and resulted in national and regional, but to a lesser extend global, media coverage².

Conduct a photographic exhibition in Hue and Hanoi to look at communities, landscapes and forests under the Green Corridor project in Hue

In early October 2007, the photo exhibition ‘Forests and Local Livelihoods’ was shown at the World Wildlife Week in Thua Thien Hue province. In November, WWF participated with the exhibition at the Green Week in Hanoi.



Inauguration of the exhibition “Forests and Local Livelihoods’ in Thua Thien Hue province.

© Chris Dickinson/WWF Greater Mekong Programme

Distribute existing communications materials (see annual report) to target audiences, including local communities and government officials at provincial and local levels

The July-August edition of the *Heritage* magazine (Vietnam Airlines publication displayed on all flights) features the Green Corridor project and the interdependence between ethnic minorities and forest ecosystems in its cover story.

Facilitated by WWF, the Chairman of the Quang Nam Provincial Peoples Committee announced in the media that the province will critically review its plans on hydropower development, including doing SEAs. The public statement was made at the time of the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) summit in Mach 2008. The announcement was well covered in Vietnamese media and triggered the discussion on unplanned dams development in the country.

A BBC World Service Radio Programme on the Central Annamites, with involvement of WWF and partners, was broadcast at the beginning of 2008.

WWF US (CAN) and WWF International (Panda passport) online actions collected more than 26,000 signatures from citizens of more than 150 countries in support of saola protection. of. The signers applaud the Provincial Governments of Quang Nam and Thua Thien Hue for the

² Announced already in annual report FY07, but results had not yet been reported.

establishment of the new saola protected areas and call on them to take the next steps to set up the needed management regimes and infrastructure. It is planned to hand over the signatures in an event in fall 2008, to be organized with support from USAID. The event shall trigger additional efforts from the Vietnamese Government for the protection of the saola.

II. Lower Mekong Dry Forests Ecoregion

Please note that no direct funding support has been provided to the Cambodian government.

Collaborators/Partners

Royal Government of Cambodia:

- Ministry of Environment (MOE); Administration of Nature Conservation and Protection (ANCP, formerly DNCP) and Mondulki Provincial Environment Departments;
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF); Forestry Administration (FA); Fisheries Administration (FiA); Provincial Department of Agriculture (PDA);
- Ministry of Urbanization, Land Management, and Construction (MULMC); Mondulki Provincial Department of Urbanization, Land Management, and Construction (PDULMC);
- Ministry of Rural Development (MRD); Provincial Department of Rural Development (PDRD);
- Ministry of Tourism (MOT); Mondulki Provincial Department of Tourism (PDT);
- Ministry of Interior (MOI); Mondulki Provincial Government Office (PGO); Mondulki Provincial Department of Police.
- Provincial Rural Development Committee (PRDC)
- Commune Councils (CCs)

International NGOs

- Birdlife International (BI)
- Conservation International (CI)
- Oxfam America
- TRAFFIC Indochina Programme (SE Asia)
- Wildlife Alliance (formerly WildAid)
- Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)

Summary: Period 10/01/07—09/30/08

Lower Mekong Dry Forest Highlights:

Cambodia:

In FY09, GCP2 support helped to catalyze the following achievements in the Lower Mekong Dry Forests of Cambodia's Eastern Plains:

- The Eastern Plains Biodiversity Review was completed. Based on scientific reports and publications of WWF, WCS and others, the Biodiversity Review identifies and delineates zones of importance for biodiversity conservation management and priorities for corridors in

Mondulkiri, and will serve as a source document for provincial decision-makers. It is published in Khmer and has been distributed widely in Mondulkiri Province;

- A Sustainable Agriculture and Land Use Planning Assessment study was completed to gain an understanding of agricultural trends and developments in Mondulkiri Province;
- A scoping paper on Sustainable Financing Mechanisms for Natural Resource and Protected Area Management was drafted, identifying the potential for a conservation trust fund, small-scale eco-tourism, commercial community forestry, and carbon financing;
- Following up on the “Ecotourism Feasibility Study for the Srepok Wilderness Area, Mondulkiri Protected Forest” (FY07), an MPF Eco-tourism Management Plan was drafted in close consultation with key partners and local communities living in and around protected areas. The management plan identifies roles of potential partners, eco-lodge and nature tourism activities zones, tourism products, information and marketing, and institutional management structure;
- Wildlife Eco-tourism Management Board (WEMB), aiming to coordinate decision making on all activities related to nature tourism in the province, was endorsed and established by provincial government office;
- Five community associations (honey, resin, fisheries, forestry, and land use) were set up with the aim of improving local community livelihoods;



Photo: Label for local honey product, March 2008

- Funds leveraged – during this report period, we have successfully drawn a number of other donors to the project. These have included DFID/Danida, WWF-US, BHP Billiton (via WCS), WWF Germany, WWF Sweden, the October Hill Foundation, Bob King, Orvis, and Di Stefano. The success of the Eastern Plains landscape project has encouraged both donors and management to replicate and expand this model elsewhere in the region e.g. Southern Laos and the Cardamoms area of Southwestern Cambodia;

Communications and events in FY08:

- The US Ambassador to Cambodia, the USAID Mission Director in Cambodia, and a dozen invited Khmer journalists visited the Mondulkiri Protected Forest from 24 to 27 March 2008, raising the Eastern Plains Dry Forests profile in national press. This is the second visit by a

high-ranking foreign diplomat. The first trip was the British Ambassador to Cambodia, reported previously;

- A National Geographic short film (“Wild Chronicles”) was made in the Srepok Wilderness Area project site in March 2008 and aired on US TV (Public Broadcasting Station) in July. The short film covered a mountain biking ecotourism development trip in the SWA, and highlighted the work being done to restore the wildlife in the Eastern Plains;
- The video “Mondulkiri Protected Forest – The making of a protected area” was broadcast on private TV (with international coverage) 6 times over 6 days in June 2008, including the launch in a prime time slot (7.30 pm). The broadcast was at the explicit request of the Apsara TV channel and free of the usual charges for such screening (several thousand dollars), indicating growing awareness of the Dry Forests among media;
- The video “The Forest is Our Life” (this video was funded by USAID via ARD) was broadcast on the Apsara TV’s Environment Programme (first screening in a prime time slot on Saturday 30th August 2008);
- Quarterly Newsletters produced (4 issues over the last FY);
- A media trip for Japanese TV (based in Tokyo) was organized in February 2008, aiming to produce a documentary film about Cambodia’s culture and natural resources in the Eastern Plains landscape. This documentary film will be broadcast on Japanese TV;



Photo: US Ambassador trip to Srepok Wilderness Area Project, March 2008 © WWF-Greater Mekong Programme 2008

Results by Objective and Activity

Objective II.1: Conserve species, habitats, and their interactions

The Eastern Plains is experiencing increasingly rapid changes through better road access and security that precipitate an influx of speculative “investments”. These changes will increase in scale over the coming decade. Much of the development is poorly planned with little or no consideration of local communities and environmental impacts. Land grabbing and speculation are rife and industrial land concessions and plantations are often issued bypassing provincial government. Such large-scale concessions (30+ applications in August 2008: unofficial data source) severely impact most of the Province’s population and remaining natural habitats.

However, with careful planning based on sound science, consultation and collaboration, WWF believes that the Eastern Plains can sustain economic development while maintaining itself as one of the SE Asia's most important sites for wildlife conservation.

Activity II.1.1: Landscape-scale conservation in the Eastern Plains Dry Forests Landscape

Compile and review all existing biodiversity information (i.e. not only Dry Forests but also freshwater systems) on the Eastern Plains as a foundation for provincial planning processes

A comprehensive Ecological, Conservation and Social Profile, a Needs Assessment, and an Operational Management Plan were completed for Lomphat Wildlife Sanctuary.

The Eastern Plains Biodiversity Review identifies and delineates zones of importance for biodiversity conservation management and priorities for corridors in Mondulkiri Province. Published in Khmer and distributed widely in Mondulkiri Province, the Review will serve as a source document for provincial decision makers.

Identify and analyze (negative) impacts of current and imminent industrial and large scale infrastructure developments affecting key biodiversity areas in the Eastern Plains landscape

In November 2007, WWF launched a new project to address Agriculture and Land Use Planning issues in Mondulkiri province. In the first phase of the project, a detailed situational assessment was done to understand key issues, threats, and opportunities. It also included recommendations for how WWF could best support the provincial government and other key stakeholders in addressing these urgent challenges within the landscape. An initial workshop was held in Mondulkiri in February 2008 to present these findings to provincial officials and obtain their feedback on the development of a strategy for the second phase of this project which is now beginning. The second phase (Jan-Dec 2008) aims to introduce the concept of land suitability assessment and mapping as part of the Mondulkiri Province's land use planning process. It will comprehensively assess land suitability at the commune level in 4 communes of a single district most affected by rampant land concessions.

We established and maintained an informal dialogue between WWF, WCS, and BHP Billiton. This dialogue group aims to exchange information on mining activities planning and conservation priorities in the landscape. Earlier this year, the BHP Country Programme Manager left, causing the dialogue group to be stalled for a while. It resumed in August. A similar dialogue was opened with the Southern Gold mining company, an Australian gold prospecting company with leases in the Eastern Plains Dry Forests landscape.

A detailed situational assessment was done to understand key issues, threats, and opportunities of plantations, and the report was published in February 2008.

Engage key stakeholders in initial steps to improve coordination on provincial land-use planning decisions

During FY08, USAID support enabled WWF to integrate project-based, site- and species-oriented activities into a comprehensive landscape-level approach across sites and government

agencies, and to unify its operations into a single Eastern Plains Landscape operation merging several individual projects and funding sources, thus enhancing ecological integrity and landscape-level connectivity.

The Provincial Rural Development Committee (PRDC, the cabinet of the provincial governor) established a permanent Working Group for Provincial Conservation Planning (PCPWG). Soon after establishment, the Governor revoked a 1000-ha rubber concession license in Pu Tang village within the Mondulkiri Protected Forest;

Support opportunities for greater participation of affected stakeholders in planning and policymaking processes through further awareness-raising and WWF facilitation of planning meetings

We established and trained five community based natural resource management associations. These community organizations advocate to government and communities alike for resource use rights and responsibilities, and benefit sharing, as well as monitor the movement of new people into the area, and promote of sustainable resource use and management.

We provided ongoing support to all current field based management projects including protected area management (MPF, PPWS), community based natural resource management, natural resources based livelihood development, continued dialogue and mainstreaming environment into provincial development planning.



Photo: Community based resource management team meeting, PPWS, October 2007 © WWF Greater Mekong Programme

Develop a Sustainable Financing Strategy and a Draft Conservation Corridors Strategy that provide a blue print for feasible financing options including Payment for Environment Services (PES)

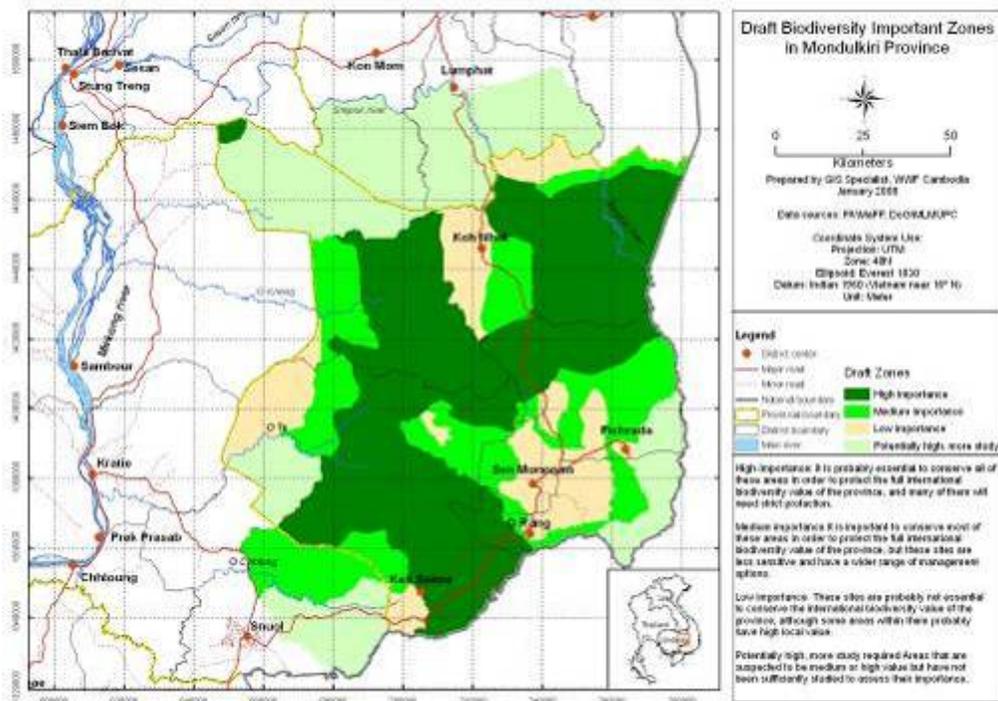
As part of “A Needs Assessment for Financial Sustainability for Greater Mekong Protected Areas”, preliminary findings and recommendations were formulated for sustainable financing options for protected area management in Cambodia.

The work through the informal mining dialogue resulted in WWF-US funding to assess the impact of mining in the Eastern Plains and to initiate high level policy advocacy.

The ADB-funded Biodiversity Corridors Initiative Pilot Site project in Cambodia's Eastern Plains continued. USAID support made it possible for WWF to take a lead role among the 6 pilot sites in the Greater Mekong Subregion, where WWF implements, with partners, 3 pilot sites (Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam) out of 6 (others in Thailand, Yunnan, and a 2nd site in Cambodia). During ADB's midterm evaluation mission in June 2008, the mission was alerted to three hydro power development projects that will affect core protected areas in the Eastern Plains Pilot Site.



Photo: Illegal logging activity in Mondulkiri Protected Forest, November 2007 © WWF – Greater Mekong Programme



Map: Draft Biodiversity Review Map in the Eastern Plains landscape © WWF – Greater Mekong Programme

Leveraging funds to support landscape-wide conservation in the Eastern Plains

USAID provided overall assistance to facilitate and coordinate the smooth implementation of the landscape-wide approach among key decision-making and technical government and NGO partner agencies. The following are the key achievements in leveraging funding during FY08:

- Secured over \$1.1 million for “Tiger Conservation in the Plains of Eastern Cambodia” from private sources through WWF-US (Orvis, Robert and Monique King, Distefano) and from WWF-Sweden. The project aims to ensure that core habitat of the Indochinese tiger within Monduliri Protected Forest and Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuary stays connected and that tigers and their prey at least double in population size over the next 10 years;
- Secured US\$55,000 for DNA analysis of elephant dung in Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuary, from Asian Economic Conservation Fund, US Fish and Wildlife Service. The main objectives of the project are: a) conduct survey and analysis of dung DNA to estimate the Asian elephant population based in Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuary; b) use DNA analysis to estimate elephant migration among adjacent conservation areas within Cambodia's Eastern Plains Landscape, in collaboration with conservation partners; c) develop a long-term plan for monitoring of the Eastern Plains elephant population, in collaboration with conservation partners;
- Secured an extra (final) year of protected area funding for MPF from WWF-NL (€100,000)
- Secured \$37,500 from BHP Billiton’s social and environmental fund via WCS Cambodia Programme for extra camera traps and a village level environmental education campaign in MPF and PPWS;
- Developed and submitted 2 large project proposals:

- “Re-connecting landscapes to support livelihoods and sustainable use of forests in Cambodia and Laos” (thru WWF-Germany submitted to EC, €2.2 million, 3 yr), the project will take lessons from the Eastern Plains to Laos.
- “Sustainable Resource Management in Eastern Plains and Cardamom Mountains, Cambodia” (with Conservation International thru WWF-Germany submitted to German Ministry of Environment [BMU], €2.65 million, 4 years)

Activity II.1.2: Develop and strengthen the Srepok Wilderness Area Project, Cambodia

Operationalize and implement priority components in the new Mondulkiri Protected Forest management Plan

During FY08, USAID support allowed WWF to embark on a major fundraising effort to further develop and strengthen protected area management in the Eastern Plains. With WWF-Germany, a 3 year, €2.2 million, project was developed to re-connect landscapes in support of livelihoods and sustainable use of forests in Cambodia and Laos. The project aims to further strengthen management of MPF and PPWS, initiate protected area management of the Lomphat Wildlife Sanctuary (thereby integrating LWS into the landscape level approach adopted for the Eastern Plains), and in addition the project will also ‘export’ lessons learned in the Eastern Plains of Cambodia to the Dry Forests of the Savannakhet and Salavan Provinces, Lao PDR.

The Srepok Wilderness Area Project came to a formal end in the sense that protected area management in the MPF is now part of the expanded Eastern Plains Landscape Project (as described in the previous section); in this way WWF is taking an integrated landscape approach to conservation.

Protected area management of the Mondulkiri Protected Forest and the Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuary were further improved, streamlined and integrated, as a result of the shift to a landscape level approach, including:

- established boundary markings of different zones in MPF;
- established tiger monitoring grid;
- established mobile rapid response team for improved law enforcement in PPWS and MPF;
- integrated management of PPWS and MPF under newly appointed Eastern Plains Landscape Manager, and appointment a Biodiversity Monitoring TA for PPWS and MPF;
- strengthened use of the MIST and MOMS databases for management decision making;



Photo: Biodiversity monitoring survey in MPF, January 2008 © WWF – Greater Mekong Programme

Continue to provide local community capacity building for participation in land use planning processes

Capacity strengthened in communities to manage their own natural resources, through training in PLUP, boundary mapping, environmental education, NRM regulations & consultation processes, indigenous land management rights

Also through WWF-Germany, and in partnership with Conservation International Cambodia, a second, 3-year, €2.65 million proposal was developed for sustainable resource management in Eastern Plains and the Cardamom Mountains (CI work in SW Cambodia). This project aims to: promote sustainable, community-based management of protected areas /forests in the Eastern Plains and the Cardamom Mountains thus protecting forest ecosystems; foster adaptation to climate change; and secure local livelihoods. In addition, through its climate change component (Greenhouse Gas (GHG) mitigation and increased adaptation) the project aims to reduce emissions from forest degradation and deforestation, thereby restoring forests in their function as important GHG sinks and enriching the national level promotion of the REDD concept.

Explore options for Population, Health and Environment to provide Family Planning/Reproductive Health to communities, and develop a pilot project

Although this activity was planned for FY08 with confidence that we would receive funding, WWF was unable to secure additional funds to implement this exploration exercise. Hence, when WWF received notification that this activity could not be funded, we did not develop a pilot project for Population, Health and Environment.

Undertake necessary research for preparation of an ecotourism business investment plan for tourism in the MPF, including the cost to construct a small eco-lodge, its operation costs, and profit-generating rates for investor(s), PA management, and communities

In FY08, eco-tourism remained WWF's focus as a potential mechanism to generate sustainable financing for MPF and PPWS PA management. Following up on the "Ecotourism Feasibility Study for the Srepok Wilderness Area, Mondulkiri Protected Forest" (FY07), an MPF Eco-tourism Management Plan was drafted and submitted to the Forest Administration for review and approval. With and within the Mondulkiri ExCom/PRDC, a Wildlife Eco-tourism Management Board (WEMB) was developed comprising all provincial line departments involved directly and

indirectly in tourism. This provincial WEMB caps the commune-level WEMBs that WWF facilitated in FY07. An ecotourism business plan for an 8-room, 16-person tented camp and a village homestay, is partly drafted, waiting for review and input from business specialists.

In FY08, the eco-tourism Management Plan for MPF was completed and submitted to government for review and approval.

Continued support for a second phase of the eco-lodge development is likely from Habitat Grup (Spanish private donor).



Photos: Female tiger photographed in MPF in late November 2007 © Camera trap / WWF – Greater Mekong Programme

Objective II.2: Capacity building of local, national, and international stakeholders to plan long-term biodiversity conservation in the Dry Forest Ecoregion

Activity II.2.1: Extend capacity to mobilize and manage large-scale conservation across the Dry Forests

Continue to work with the Ministries of Environment (MoE), Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (MAFF) in Cambodia, to gain approval and support for the Dry Forests Plan through integration in the updated NBSAP

In December 2007, the new Protected Area Law was accepted by parliament after nearly a five-year process. The Law calls for zonation of all protected areas in Cambodia. The (draft) Management Plans for PPWS and for MPF have anticipated the zonation. However, the Minister of Environment immediately informed international conservation NGOs that core zones, with the highest level of protection under the Law, can not be delineated until it has become clear that no exploitable mineral deposits are present in any proposed core zones. WWF organized a meeting between the Minister of Environment and six international conservation NGOs active in Cambodia to express concern over this delay in approval of zonation plans.

During meetings with senior MoE officials, WWF continued to offer assistance in revising the NBSAP, because the MoE was trying to obtain UNDP support to organize stakeholder meetings to revise the NBSAP. However, for reasons unknown to WWF, MoE failed to secure UNDP support to revise the NBSAP.

Build partnerships through appropriate forums in Cambodia to facilitate implementation of the plan, and improve coordination between government agencies and NGOs

In response to the RGoC announcement, after the new Protected Area Law, that mineral exploitation would take absolute precedence over conservation, WWF took the initiative to call a series of meetings among all six large international conservation organisations active in Cambodia (WWF, WCS, CI, FFI, WildAid (now Wildlife Alliance), Birdlife), to formulate a common position and strategy. Never before had these NGOs come together to unite behind a common cause. As a result, the Minister of Environment and his senior staff agreed to meet with the six NGOs (see also above). During that meeting the Minister of Environment agreed to call an open forum meeting 2 weeks later between the MoE, Ministry of Industry, Mining and Energy, mining companies in Cambodia, NGOs, and World Bank to clarify the matter.

With the Mondulkiri ExCom/PRDC, establish a Permanent Working Group on Conservation and Development to facilitate information sharing and integrated planning activities

WWF continued to assist the Mondulkiri provincial government to integrate and coordinate planning processes through regular and ad hoc meetings at all levels in the province. The Provincial Rural Development Committee (PRDC, the cabinet of the provincial governor) of Mondulkiri established a permanent Working Group for Provincial Conservation Planning. Soon after establishment of the Working Group, the Governor revoked a 1,000-ha rubber concession license inside Mondulkiri Protected Forest (as reported above). Furthermore, WWF's Provincial Planning Specialist in the Governor's Office worked with the Working Group to add an environmental section in the Province's 5-year Commune Development Plans and derived rolling 1-year Commune Investment Plans, the first time this has been done in Cambodia. In addition, the Mondulkiri PRDC/Excom called on WWF to lead implementation of two community fisheries communes' investment projects funded by the Cambodia Government (totaling US\$7,000).

Based on the training needs assessment (TNA) conducted in FY07 among government officials at provincial, district, and commune levels in Mondulkiri Province, in FY08 WWF will develop and conduct training courses for government officials and local communities in Mondulkiri: at least five different courses including biodiversity conservation, participatory protected area management, participatory land use planning, and community based approaches to NRM.

A consultancy contract has been signed with the Community-based NRM Learning Institute (a Cambodian NGO) to run three courses - “Biodiversity conservation (basic) and natural resource management”, “Natural resource management planning”, and “Leadership - Role in NRM and environmental governance”. – during September-October 2008. Each course will be given to three groups of approximately 16 provincial government officials from line departments, and to three groups of approximately 18 community leaders.

Strengthen capacity of local government officials to deliver improved on-the-ground management in collaboration with local communities, by designing and conducting two special training workshops on community liaising and community consultation for selected local government officials who work closely with local communities in the landscape.

In January 2008, WWF organized a 7-day study tour for 22 district governors, provincial government department technical staff and Provincial Rural Development Committee members from Mondulkiri, on sustainable community forestry management and community ecotourism management around protected areas in Siem Reap and Preah Vihear provinces. As a result, provincial government staff became aware of the income-generating potential of community-based natural resources and culture oriented tourism, ultimately leading to support for the establishment of the provincial Wildlife Ecotourism Management Board (WEMB, see above).

Strengthen local communities’ capacity to manage their own resources and understand their legal rights through: a needs assessment of community education and awareness raising materials in at least six priority sites in the landscape; design of awareness raising materials; and conducting community education and awareness raising workshops in at least 20 villages in the priority sites of the landscape

A series of environmental education and awareness raising activities were conducted by a Community Extension Team in the priority target communes in the dry forest landscape. These activities included training on how to use Environmental Awareness Flipchart, Participatory Learning Techniques in Environmental Education, Solid Waste Management, Biodiversity and Ecosystem Conservation, Water Cycle, and the importance of Forests. A total of at least 300 people have received direct informal education from the project team; we assume they will pass the messages on to hundreds of people within their communities.



Photo: WWF Community Extension Team using flip chart to raise environmental awareness, February 2008 © WWF – Greater Mekong Programme

Initiate a transboundary conservation cooperation dialogue between Monduliri's Provincial Conservation Planning Unit (established in 2007) and Vietnamese provincial and PA authorities, and conduct field trips for Cambodian and Vietnamese government delegations to see project sites and to discuss the conservation issues and to develop recommendations

The Governor of Monduliri, with support from WWF, initiated a dialogue on transboundary conservation cooperation with his counterpart in the Vietnamese province of Dac lac, suggesting an initial introductory visit among protected area managers from the two provinces (i.e., between Monduliri Protected Forest and Yok Don National Park). Twice the Governor sent an official letter with a detailed draft itinerary for a transboundary visit to Yok Don NP; however a delayed reaction from the Vietnamese side led to postponement because of the approaching general elections in late July in Cambodia. Later, the dialogue stalled, allegedly because an international NGO (WWF) would join the visitors to Yok Don NP. This misunderstanding on the Vietnamese side is now slowly being cleared.

Activity II.2.2: Build awareness and effective communication on conservation

WWF continues to focus on building capacity and awareness to increase local understanding of sustainable natural resource use and management.

Implement WWF Cambodia's "Communications Strategy for the Greater Mekong Cambodia Country Programme 2006-2008" directed at the Cambodian government, international government and aid agencies, NGOs and development projects, private sector players, and local communities

The Cambodian communication strategy is being implemented resulting in: (see also under highlights above):

- A visit by the US Ambassador, the USAID Mission Director, and Khmer journalists to the Monduliri Protected Forest in March 2008.
- Films made and broadcasted nationally and abroad raising the profile of the Eastern Plains (National Geographic's "Wild Chronicles", WWF's "Monduliri Protected Forest – The making of a protected area", ARD/USAID's "The Forest is Our Life", and a Japanese TV documentary about Cambodia's culture and natural resources in the Eastern Plains landscape.
- Quarterly newsletter about WWF Cambodia's activities and achievements.
- WWF participated in Cambodia's annual Environmental Week with a small exhibit on, among others, the Eastern Plains.

Produce new awareness raising materials on natural resource management, particularly for use in Bunong communities

WWF's Communications Unit produced a poster on endangered wildlife species and one on threatened wildlife species in support of the RGoC's recently adopted lists of endangered and threatened species in an effort to stop illegal trade through raising awareness on their legal status in Cambodia. The Communications Unit further produced and distributed posters (in Khmer and English) on: dry forest landscape of the EP, tigers in the EP, biodiversity corridors in the EP (Forests of our Future), sustainable family-based honey collecting and marketing, small-scale resin collecting, ecotourism in the EP, rattan production and marketing, rattan guidebook. They

also produced an environmental flip chart about burning and the forest fire issue; and a natural resource management tool.



Photo: Posters by the Communication Unit at WWF's office during the Environmental Week 2008 © WWF – Greater Mekong Programme

Organise a one week “Bunong and Dry Forests Cultural Fair Festival” in Mondulakiri that aims to develop deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of Bunong people and the Dry Forests

A proposal submitted to the UNDP for partial funding for the Fair Festival was granted. However a proposal submitted to the UK Embassy failed to secure the remaining funding for reasons undisclosed by the donor. As a result, we were not able to organize the Fair festival.

Regularly contribute provincial conservation and development messages to the ExCom/PRDC's existing quarterly newsletter (in Khmer) distributed among all line agencies and key decision makers in the Mondulakiri province

Publication and distribution of the ExCom/PRDC's 4-page quarterly newsletter, to which WWF contributes 1 page on conservation planning, was discontinued because of lack of funding in ExCom/PRDC's budget. Nonetheless, WWF provided the 1-page text on the issues.

Translate into Khmer (and possibly Bunong) and disseminate key reports (impacts of large scale agricultural developments, biodiversity analysis, threats analysis, etc.) among provincial decision makers

The Provincial Biodiversity Review was produced in Khmer. A summary of the report on impacts of large scale agricultural developments was translated into Khmer and distributed to provincial Governor of Mondulakiri, the Ministry of Interior (the provincial Governor's line management), Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Ministry of Land Management, and Ministry of Environment, with the intention that the ministries would follow up on the recommendations. In addition, WWF provided GIS shape files of mining and agriculture concessions, forest cover, and protected areas at the request of the Ministry of Land Management which was lacking that information.

Distribute regular media releases on the biodiversity and livelihoods value of the Dry Forests, and on progress being made by WWF and its partners in implementing strategic conservation interventions that support existing national strategies

No priority was given to a press release due to severe understaffing of the WWF

Communications Unit, which was reduced from four to one full-time and one part-time staff.

Develop and conduct training courses for government officials and local communities in Mondulhiri on a number of different topics, including biodiversity conservation and participatory protected area management

We facilitated the training of 25 Bunong-speaking community members on how to conduct environmental education in their communities. The participants were selected Bunong facilitators who are working with the International Cooperation for Cambodia (ICC), an organization working on literacy programme in Mondulhiri province. This strategy to work with the existing Bunong facilitators in the community is to encourage them to incorporate topics on environmental education in their literacy program. The project team selected potential facilitators for the intensive training and monitored these selected facilitators in August to identify additional trainings to further improve their skills.

We conducted train-the-trainer courses for 20 participants on how to use the environmental flip charts and supported the trainees as they carried out the follow up activities in priority communes within the landscape.

Objective II.3: Protect priority landscapes and corridors through sustainable use of forest resources, sustainable agriculture, and forest restoration

Activity II.3.1: Increase community benefits from community-based natural resource management, contributing to the learning exchange within WWF on payment for ecological services

Over the last year, WWF's work with local communities in and around the key protected areas in Mondulhiri has been expanded. This was based on much of the survey and groundwork undertaken in FY07 by WWF's Community Extension Team, (including the completion of four 3-Dimensional model maps in the three focus community clusters between MPF and Phnom Prich WS, and an initial inventory of community livelihood options in three villages (honey, resin harvesting). Also in FY08, the Community Extension Team continued to build relationships within the three target community clusters around the key protected areas, completed the large scale socio-economic survey begun in FY07, and made significant progress towards making some tangible improvements to the livelihoods of local communities.

Continue Participatory Land Use Planning (PLUP) and CBNRM work around MPF/SWA and Phnom Prich WS, and start around Lomphat WS

WWF Community Extension Teams set up village environmental monitoring teams. A total of 15 community members from 2 communes around MPF were initially trained in the basic concepts of a Management Oriented Monitoring System (MOMS) that was developed in Namibia 15 years ago and has been an extremely successful tool for community management of wildlife. Teams were taught how to record data in the MOMS monitoring books (illegal activities, wildlife sightings, and NTFP collection).

Baseline community work around Lomphat Wildlife Sanctuary (LWS) was completed and draft documents are being reviewed: Socio-economic and ecological baseline profile for Lomphat Wildlife Sanctuary; Strategic direction for LWS; Needs assessment for LWS, Operational Management Plan for LWS; Draft stakeholder group guidelines.

Establish, train and build the capacity of protected area communities, forestry communities, and fisheries communities through 4 commune- or village-level NRM sub-committees on concepts of community participation in NRM, participatory planning, survey techniques/tools, conservation and biodiversity management, etc.

Three courses - ‘Biodiversity conservation (basic) and natural resource management’, ‘Natural resource management planning’, and ‘Leadership - Role in NRM and environmental governance’ - have been committed for execution in September-October 2008 under a consultancy contract with the Community-based NRM Learning Institute (a Cambodian NGO). Each course will be given to three groups of approximately 16 provincial government officials from line departments, and to three groups of approximately 18 community leaders.

A series of environmental education and awareness raising activities were conducted by Community Extension Team in the priority target communes in the dry forest landscape. This activity included training on how to use the Environmental Awareness Flipchart, Participatory Learning Techniques in Environmental Education, Solid Waste Management, Biodiversity and Ecosystem Conservation, the Water Cycle, and the importance of Forests. A total of at least 300 people have received direct informal education from the project team, and we assume they will pass the messages on to hundreds of people within their communities

Support the 4 NRM sub-committees through the identification of resource and capacity gaps in resource rights and responsibilities and further training on such responsibilities

We are providing ongoing support to the three strategic community clusters in the MPF and two selected key community areas in PPWS, through building trust with local communities, providing technical assistance, capacity building for natural resource management and land use planning, and empowering local people through participation in resource use planning and decision making.

Continue to develop and support Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) and protected area co-management in 8 sites in priority communities, two each in the 4 communes/villages. This will include support to PLUP, training, planning, and community monitoring, developing community co-management agreements and co-management plans

In the Sre Kthum and Sen Monorum communes, CBNRM committees were established in the Sre Kthum and Sen Monorum villages. Also in the Sre Kthum commune, PLUP was introduced in O Am and O Rana villages, and the O Rana village submitted their PLUP agreement to the Provincial Department of Environment (the department has not yet reviewed the agreement). The Forest Administration has not yet reviewed the CPA agreement developed in Andoung Kraloeung village (Sen Monorum commune). A 3D map for whole Pu Chrey commune has been completed, while PLUP was introduced and accepted in 4 villages in the Pu Chrey commune, resulting in one Land Management and Resources Use Committee now operational in the Pu Tang village (see below). Twenty committee members and 86 community representatives were trained in the use of mapping aids and relevant laws.

Two Community Protected Forests (CPF) areas were designated within MPF in FY08, the boundaries delineated, and indicated in the field. CPF committees were established and relevant regulations developed. In the coming year WWF will facilitate the official approval of these CPFs³ as well as the preparation of management plans for the previously established Community Protected Areas (CPAs) within PPWS.

Leveraging BCI funding, conduct a market links survey for setting up the sustainable agricultural products, and small-scale infrastructure support to local community in priority sites (e.g. water wells, school improvement, ceremonial houses – for which funds are available through BCI project)

Continue the development of feasibility studies and pilot activities for targeted livelihoods assistance, e.g. ecotourism, organic agriculture, and NTFP processing, through developing and implementing specific plans in 2 pilot project sites

We established one new livelihood project on honey collection, processing, quality management, and marketing in three communes (Sok San, Sre Huy & Chong Phlah) and strengthened existing livelihood projects (resin, home gardening) in two communes (Bu Chrey and Krang Teh).



Photo: Filtering equipment for honey, 2008

In FY08, WWF established two honey associations and two resin associations in two communes in Mondulhiri. These associations will provide communities with the support structure for marketing sustainably harvested honey and resin from the protected forests. Already in mid 2008, 400 litres of honey had been produced through these associations, and there is interest from buyers in Phnom Penh to provide a market for the product. There is also potential for organic certification. These developments represent significant opportunities for adding value to local products, so long as the production is sustainable. WWF will expand the number of associations in FY09 and follow through on the opportunities for certification of forest products.

The first harvest of 400 liters by the honey association was collected for market testing. The market testing will establish the name of the product and link the associations with different markets. To date, one buyer committed to buying 120 liters for one year. Links with other shops and restaurants are also being facilitated for product consignment. An organization in Phnom Penh assisted in developing a marketing strategy and in product development. The product was bottled and labeled carrying the associations' names.

WWF implemented an Agricultural Production project in Sok San Commune with technical assistance from CEDAC (a local NGO experienced in agricultural extension work). This project

³ Official approval of all CPFs (and all Protected Forests Management Plans) was put on hold pending the outcome of a nation-wide mineral deposit inventory. However, FA recently sent out invitations to (re)submit requests for CPF approvals.

aims to improve food production through agricultural innovation (including SRI – Systems of Rice Intensification), establishing village-based farmers’ associations, increasing access to credit by establishing community finance savings groups, and training indigenous youth as agriculture technicians.



Photo: SRI Pilot in Sok San Commune, 2008

Tourism is another sector where there is potential for community-based income generation. In FY08, WWF facilitated the establishment of a provincial Wildlife Ecotourism Management Board (WEMB) that will function to provide technical guidance to the provincial government on establishing and managing sustainable ecotourism projects. Within this context, WWF initiated a pilot homestay project in one village in MPF.

Leveraging BCI funding, conduct a market links survey for setting up the sustainable agricultural products, and small-scale infrastructure support to local community in priority sites (e.g. water wells, school improvement, ceremonial houses – for which funds are available through BCI project)

The recent developments related to Forest Carbon markets also represent a major opportunity for sustainable financing of forest conservation and sustainable protection as well as for direct income generation for forest-based communities. In FY08, with support from ADB, WWF produced a feasibility study of the potential for generating carbon offsets based on payments from the voluntary and REDD markets. Specifically, in September 2008, WWF, jointly with CI, submitted a Euro 2.7 million proposal with the German Development Bank (KfW) to the German Ministry of Environment’s Climate Change Initiative (international section), which builds on and continues from the two main components of the Biodiversity Corridors Initiative: poverty reduction and PA management, and added a component on REDD preparedness. Two key agencies (MoE and FA) readily provided strong endorsement letters to the German Ministry of Environment. The proposal was developed based on a successful concept note in May. Preliminary feedback from the Ministry was very positive.

III. Learning Component

Objective III.1 Develop an understanding of the impacts of the growing mining sector in the Greater Mekong Subregion

As a result of increased demand, high commodity prices, and the global geo-political context, previously unattractive mineral deposits in key WWF priority ecoregions have come under increasing scrutiny by the mining industry. Nowhere is this trend clearer than in the Asia-Pacific region, where the lack of regulatory frameworks, lax enforcement, and the proximity to China combine to make the region especially attractive to potential investors.

Activity III.1

Recognizing the important threat that mining could pose for the Greater Mekong, an analysis of the current mining situation in the region was undertaken, and a strategy was developed for future work in this area. The initial assessment attempted to answer the following questions:

- Where are the primary mineral development areas in the Greater Mekong and how do these overlap with the Greater Annamites and Dry Forests priority landscapes?
- Which US and Canadian companies have mining interests in the region and pose the best opportunities for engaging on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)?
- What is the role of governments and the public sector and how should they be engaged?
- Is small scale mining a threat?

The assessment covered the study area of all of Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar (Burma), Laos, and Yunnan province in China, and included all major base and precious metals and industrial minerals (gypsum, limestone, gravel and sand). The assessment did not include fossil fuel minerals, as data were not acquired and/or unavailable. An analysis of potential and actual mining sites overlapping with the Lower Mekong Dry Forests and Greater Annamites ecoregions revealed that the majority of the mining sites occur within our priority ecoregions, and that a large proportion of “advanced” exploration mining sites (sites with known deposits and known operators in a feasibility stage of exploration) are found in the Dry Forest and Kayah-Karen & Tenasserim ecoregions.

The majority of mining companies that were reported to hold interest in the Mekong Region are headquartered in China or are Canadian and Australian exploration companies. Many of these companies have already developed corporate sustainability policies and have taken steps to engage with stakeholders on the ground and in the global arena. However, it was recommended that the Greater Mekong Program focus its engagement with the mining industry on four main corporate targets: BHP-Billiton, Rio Tinto Alcan, Alcoa, and Oxiana. It was also suggested that as the largest globally diversified mining company, BHP-Billiton represents the most significant opportunity for developing a new sustainable-practices policy in the mining sector.

Most governments in the Mekong have not fully developed policies or regulatory frameworks for mining, due in part to the lack of demand and interest from major investors. With the exception of Thailand and Vietnam, the remaining Greater Mekong Subregion countries have not developed detailed laws regulating the mining sector. Provisions for community consultation and consent, related to proposed mining projects, are mostly non-existent throughout the region. In

addition to the lack of proper regulatory framework for mining, some countries lack adequate environmental and social safeguards, including laws ensuring revenue transparency, equitable benefit distribution, EIAs, and pollution prevention.

Until recently, most mining occurring in the Mekong Region was undertaken by small-scale, artisanal miners using rudimentary techniques with few health or environmental safeguards in place. With the exception of local communities engaged in artisanal mining or the limited number of farmers who supplement their income from subsistence agriculture by working for wealthier mine operators, local communities benefit only marginally from employment in the mining sector. However, since governments do not allocate permits for artisanal mining, small-scale miners operate illegally and without government oversight or regulation. The report found that it was recommended by the World Bank to the Laos government to allow miners to apply for and receive permits for operating in an environmentally and socially responsible manner. However, such regulations would also need to be accompanied by capacity building and technical training opportunities to organize and educate miners to use more environmentally friendly mining techniques. The mining assessment indicated that without profound policy interventions aimed at equitable distribution of mining revenues, the economic benefits of artisanal mining to traditional agricultural communities are likely to decline.

Following the findings from the mining assessment, a detailed strategy for addressing mining as a major driver of biodiversity loss in WWF's priority landscapes in the Region was developed.

Activity III.2

In FY08, based on the mining assessment and participation in a Regional Driver's Strategy Workshop, a preliminary strategy was developed. The specific steps required to initiate the most urgent interventions, as well as steps to engage with business and government, were outlined. All possible strategic activities were ranked, and the subsequent scoring system resulted in three key strategies and a number of activities. These strategies include:

Strategy 1: International Markets

Promote Responsible Investment in Mining through engagement with private banks to develop mining investment strategies (based on paper developed for ANZ Mining company). This is connected to the promotion of standards (e.g. IRMA, EITI) to the private sector (including with BHP Billiton, Alcoa, Chalco, etc.), development banks (including Chinese financial institutions), bilateral donors, governments, and regional bodies (e.g. ASEAN, GMS).

- Sub-activity: Developing and promoting standards (e.g. IRMA) at the government level

Strategy 2: Policy – Advocacy Pilot Approaches

Facilitate and/or mobilize civil society group dialogue to bring concerns to the central government (especially national/local organizations).

- Sub-activity: Facilitate stakeholder discussions at field-level

Develop model institutional frameworks for laws, institutional structures and capacity building, benefit-sharing mechanisms

- Sub activity: Work with multi-lateral banks to develop mining law – World Bank in Laos;

- Sub-activity: Support law enforcement for illegal mining activities (e.g. Protected Area agencies)

Awareness raising and/or advocacy at central or provincial government level, including the media). There is a need to design a specific communications approach or key messages. And, as a part of this, key institutional players in government agencies, private sector, and power brokers must be identified

- Sub-activity: Awareness raising or education for stakeholders about mining impacts;
- Sub-activity: Promotion of 'no-go' zones.

Strategy 3: Pilot Field Project

Develop model for best practices at site-level, including post-mining clean-up (from company perspective). This includes conducting social and environmental monitoring, and building partnerships with and promoting “responsible companies” concept. This is a development priority for global players.

- Sub-activity: Identification of no-go zones through the development of a site-selection tool

Following the development of a detailed strategy that outlines specific steps required to initiate the most urgent interventions, steps were also taken to engage with business and government.

During FY08, WWF continued its engagement with BHP Billiton in the Eastern Plains Landscape. A small project was developed, led by WCS, to support small-scale conservation activities in the respective sites where WWF and WCS are focused in Mondulkiri province. However, as no formal decision has yet been announced by BHP on their plans to go ahead with full-scale mining, there have been only brief discussions with regards to the development and/or application of best mining practices and standards. This is in part due to the fact that WWF currently has very limited technical capacity in relation to mining standards, and this is an area to be rectified in FY09.

In Vietnam, no major progress has been made other than the fact that through WWF-Canada, Alcoa – a large Canadian aluminum company – has selected a province in the Southern Annamites in Vietnam as a pilot site for piloting a tool for identifying appropriate mining sites that ensure minimal or no negative impacts to areas of high biodiversity value. Although the province selected is outside WWF’s priorities in Southern Vietnam, there is significant potential to use this opportunity to inform other mining developments in the country and region.

Progress Table

Objectives, activities, anticipated outputs/results	Indicators (what you are measuring)	Baseline (Value of measurement)	Current status (Value) with discussion of any variance	Success rating (green, amber or red)
Objective 1.1: Protect, restore, and sustainably manage biodiversity elements of high scientific and economic value in the ecoregion				
Activity 1.1.1 & 1.1.2: Protect key species and sites in the Annamites				
Anticipated Outputs/Results for Activity I.1.1 & I.1.2				
Understanding of the distribution of the saola population improved	Persistence of saola across the landscape	Initial maps produced	Distribution maps further advanced, but not finalized	Green
Saola population stabilized through immediate interventions in the newly established protected areas	interventions	no interventions	First interventions	Amber
Increased awareness of negative impacts of wildlife trade.	# of wildlife trade violations	100%	Decrease by 30%	Green
Management plans produced for Bach Ma National Park and new saola reserves	Management plans produced	No management plans	Done for Bach Ma; feasibility studies for saola reserves	Amber
effective implementation of the 'Saola Sanctuary' in Thue Thien Hue	management interventions implemented	No interventions	Interventions started, but delayed	Amber
Objective 1.2: Mitigate the most urgent, broad scale pressures on biodiversity in the ecoregion				
Activity 1.2.1 Address immediate and apparent threats to biodiversity at the national and regional levels in the Greater Annamites				
Anticipated Outputs/results activity I.2.1				
Ecoregion strategy/ activity plan in place for mining	Ecoregion strategy/ activity plan developed	No ecoregion strategy/ activity plan	First draft ecoregion strategy/ activity plan elaborated	Amber
Discussion on partnership started with one international mining company to ensure that company applies best practices	Discussion started	None	Discussion about partnership under way with Alcoa	Green
Partnership established with one international commodity company	Partnership established	Discussion about partnership under way with Mars	Discussions pending	Amber
Objective 1.3 Harness local, national, and international support for long-term conservation of the ecoregion				
Activity 1.3.1 Extend capacity to mobilize and manage large-scale conservation				
Anticipated Outputs/results activity I.3.1				

Strategic action plan developed together with partners for the Southern Annamites	Strategic action plan developed	No agreed plan for Southern Annamites	Delayed, but WWF and partners developed more focused plan on tourism	Amber
Specific priority species protection action plan developed	Species plan available	No plan	Delayed	Red
Biodiversity survey of Vinh Cuu nature reserve conducted	Survey conducted	No survey	Initial survey conducted, but no WWF support needed. Instead biodiversity survey at cocoa site.	Green
Activity I.3.2: Develop and strengthen the Central Annamites Conservation Initiative				
Activity I.3.2: Engage broader stakeholder support through advocacy-based communications in the Greater Annamites				
Anticipated outputs/results for activity I.3.2				
Coordination and cooperation increased between government agencies to work at landscape level conservation	Improved coordination and cooperation	Poor coordination and cooperation	Coordination has significantly improved with support from BCI	Green
Communication productions, including a film on the work in Hue province, broadcast on national TV and an exhibition on communities, landscapes and forests shown in Hue and Hanoi.	Film broadcast, exhibition shown	None	Film broadcast, exhibition shown	Green
Increased commitment gained in funding and technical support from international donors, due to increased awareness of the global significance of the Greater Annamites, rather than piecemeal projects within the landscape.	Increased funding/technical support	Status of support in October 2007	New funding secured for projects in the landscape, but little progress on support for the landscape approach	Amber
Objective II.1: Conserve species, habitats, and their interactions				
Activity II.1.1: Landscape-scale conservation in the Eastern Plains Dry Forests				
Anticipated outputs/results for activity II.1.1				
	Eastern Plains biodiversity review report produced	Not started	Completed and distributed to partners and stakeholders in June	Green
	Sustainable Financing Strategy and Draft	Initiated	Drafted	Amber

	Conservation Corridors Strategy developed			
Activity II.1.2: Develop and strengthen the Srepok Wilderness Area Project				
Anticipated outputs/results for activity II.1.2				
	Increased management capacity in MPF	41 staff in place and trained, though still under-resource	Ongoing training though no further funds secured in FY08 to hire more rangers	Amber
	Ecotourism business investment plan	Not started	Ecotourism management plan development, business plan initiated incl. planning for construction of tented camp	Amber
Objective II.2: Capacity building of local, national, and international stakeholders to plan long-term biodiversity conservation in the Dry Forest Ecoregion				
Activity II.2.1: Extend capacity to mobilize and manage large-scale conservation across the Dry Forests				
Anticipated outputs/results for activity II.2.1				
	Coordination and information sharing among and between government agencies	Poor coordination and information sharing	Provincial Working Group for Provincial Conservation Planning established	Green
Activity II.2.2: Build awareness and effective communication on conservation				
Anticipated outputs/results for activity II.2.2				
	Involvement of communities in monitoring wildlife and natural resources	Community rangers trained in FY07; other community rangers not yet trained	15 community members trained in MOMS	Green
	Local capacity for raising environmental awareness	No local community members trained in conducting EE	25 ethnic Bunong community members trained in carrying out EE activities	Green
Objective II.3: Protect priority landscapes and corridors through sustainable use of forest resources, sustainable agriculture, and forest restoration				

Activity II.3.1: Increase community benefits from community-based natural resource management, contributing to the learning exchange on payment for ecological services within WWF				
Anticipated outputs/results for activity II.3.1				
	Involvement by local communities in management of protected areas	Two CPAs established in PPWS in FY07	Two Community Protected Areas (Forests – CPFs) in MPF	Green
	Maintained and improved community livelihoods in priority communities in the landscape	Livelihood support projects initiated in two communes in FY07	Livelihoods projects started in three additional communes, plus one agricultural improvement project, in FY08	Green
Objective III.1 Developing an understanding of the impacts of the growing mining sector in the Greater Mekong Subregion				
Activity III.1				
Anticipated outputs/results for activity III.1.				
Analysis of current mining situation in the region	Current mining situation in Greater Mekong Subregion	Initial mining assessment complete in FY08	Initial assessment complete, recommendations for strategy developed	green
Activity III.2				
Anticipated outputs/results for activity III.2.				
Preliminary strategy for engaging business and government on mining situation	Identification and engagement of business and government on mining	At least one business and one government identified and engaged in developing strategy for future work in mining	Continued engagement with at least one of the identified mining companies (BHP Billiton)	amber

Next Steps

Greater Annamites

Activity 1.1.1 Protect Key Species

- Strengthen law enforcement for saola protection in the newly established protected area through direct grants to the Forest Protection Department and National Park staff in Thua Thien Hue province. This follows WWF's previous efforts to increase the patrolling and

enforcement capacity of forest rangers. Ranger patrols will be implemented to stop violators from hunting and to remove snares from the area. The increased presence of law enforcement officials will have visible effects on reducing hunting pressure. In addition, Quang Nam and Thua Thien Hue provinces are piloting an experimental database system for enforcement planning and management that will be further tested to see whether it can improve management planning and monitoring of enforcement patrols.

- Finalize short-term baseline survey and monitoring methods for Saola. The rarity and elusiveness of Saola have meant that the development of effective methods of monitoring have been difficult to develop, with camera trapping showing promise but being dependent on additional funds. WWF will continue to investigate the potential of camera trapping as a long term monitoring method and will look into future sources of funding including the development of a ‘sponsor a camera trap’ programme for schools. However, in the short term, Saola conservation must find ways of working with the information available; hence we will also continue to develop spatially explicit interview methods to uncover and assess local people’s knowledge of Saola small-scale distribution and status and will implement these in villages across the Saola landscape. We will develop field methods to assess hunting pressure, densities of other ungulates and other environmental variables likely to be associated with Saola presence and use this information to model the likely state of Saola populations such that, even if we are not able to develop a reliable field survey method, we still have a basis for managing Saola populations in the new reserves.

Activity 1.1.2 Protect Key Sites

- Assist Bach Ma National Park with the implementation of the management plan for Bach Ma National Park including the management plan 2010 for its new extension, and with the development of a follow up management plan as of 2010 for the Bach Ma NP extension.
- Support Bach Ma National Park in the elaboration of a longer term financial model, based on the conservation and management needs, as a basis to improve income generation, investment flows from the Government and fundraising. It is envisaged that this will improve the long term funding situation of the Park and ultimately long term sustainability of the conservation approach and achievements. Once this model is established and has proved to be useful, it is the aim to replicate it for other key Protected Areas in the Greater Annamites ecoregion.
- Assist Quang Nam Forest Protection Department (FPD) and Thua Thien Hue FPD with the development and implementation of management plans and management boards, based on the recent feasibility studies, for the two new protected areas. It is expected that the Provincial Governments will increase their financial commitments, based on the feasibility studies and management plans, which will ensure improved financial sustainability for the new Protected Areas.
- Support provincial agencies in the effective implementation of the ‘Saola Sanctuary’ in Thue Thien Hue province through awareness raising, enforcement and development of staff capacity.

Activity 1.2.1 Address immediate and apparent threats to biodiversity at the national and regional levels in the Greater Annamites

- For large scale mining, a partnership with one international mining company is envisioned and will be negotiated to ensure that their operations meet the highest environmental and social standards. Discussions with companies are under way, but take longer than expected. The engagement will build on the WWF mining strategy and activity plan which has been developed for the Greater Mekong region.
- Work to improve agricultural practices by: (i) ensuring the successful production of high grade, ecologically sound cocoa from the WWF/ACDI VOCA pilot plot in the Southern Annamites. The cocoa model we promote is grown under forest canopy on degraded forest lands and is being intercropped with other crops to provide additional livelihood options for farmers. The site is located between areas of medium to high forest biodiversity value, thus functioning as a biodiversity corridor, and the tree canopy is of native species. WWF aims to replicate this approach at the landscape level in the Southern Annamites and succeeded recently in raising some funding for this.
- (ii) Beginning activities in the field on better management practices (BMPs) for cashew around Cat Tien National Park. WWF has recently been successful in raising an additional grant for cashew production and hopes to use this grant to support a program manager to disseminate the BMP results and to talk to some key commodity buyers to encourage them to purchase cashew produced in a more sustainable manner.

Activity 1.3.1 Extend capacity to mobilize and manage large-scale conservation

- Further develop WWF's presence in the Southern Annamites and replicate successful approaches pioneered in the Central and Southern Annamites. The two WWF offices in Bien Hoa and Bi Doup Nui Ba National Park established in 2007 provide a platform to gain further experiences in southern Vietnam. WWF's presence here will allow us to strengthen relationships to key stakeholders, establish linkages to other projects and explore additional opportunities where WWF can add value to the conservation efforts by establishing additional, complementary projects.
- Carry out biodiversity monitoring surveys in the WWF cocoa agro-forestry pilot in Madaguri. The continuous monitoring is crucial to assess the impacts on biodiversity and the conservation benefits of the pilot.
- Establish a baseline and monitoring system for tigers and gibbons in the Southern Annamites landscape. This will provide the basis to elaborate action plans for the protection of these species in close collaboration with key partners.
- Start developing a model for sustainable tourism in the Southern Annamites landscape and its promotion at the national level.
- Develop sustainable financing mechanisms for protected areas around forest carbon market opportunities and Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD).

Activity 1.3.2 Engage broader stakeholder support through advocacy-based communications in the Greater Annamites

- Continue to display the photographic exhibition on communities, landscapes and forests under the Green Corridor project in Hue.
- Hand over more than 26,000 signatures from citizens from more than 150 countries in support of saola protection in a national event to key Government officials from Quang Nam and Thua Thien Hue as well as the national FPD.
- Issue a global press release on the first camera trap photograph of a saola (assuming that the camera trapping is successful).

- Distribute communications outputs to target audiences, including local communities and government officials at provincial and local levels.

Lower Mekong Dry Forests

- Implement the first phase of the tiger monitoring system in two protected areas (Mondulkiri Protected Forest and Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuary) and adjoining corridors, in close collaboration with local government agencies (Forestry Administration, and Ministry of Environment), and the Wildlife Conservation Society;
- Reduce incentives for and incidence of illegal poaching in Mondulkiri through establishment and operation of multi-agency anti-poaching team across the landscape (Mondulkiri province);
- Continue to implement priority components in the Mondulkiri Protected Forest management Plan, and with local community and government participation, complete the management plan for PPWS - including seeking recognition by central government of new community protected forests;
- Undertake a detailed assessment of forest carbon stocks in the key protected areas in the landscape as the first step towards developing a mechanism for directing forest carbon market payments to local communities and government agencies;
- Continue to support the Mondulkiri Province ExCom/PRDC Permanent Working Group on Conservation and Development to facilitate information sharing (between the relevant agencies and provincial line departments) and integrated planning activities;
- Further develop transboundary conservation cooperation dialogue between Mondulkiri's Provincial Conservation Planning Unit and Vietnamese provincial and protected area authorities, especially through direct exchange meetings between the two provinces;
- Work with NGOs and CSOs to organize a training and strategic planning workshop on how to engage mining companies in responsible and equitable mining, and best management practices;
- Work with the Mondulkiri ExCom/PRDC and line departments to develop land suitability assessments;
- Develop the newly established, and establish one additional community tourism homestay in Pu Chrey communes; Develop the pilot higher-end tourism infrastructure in the MPF through a 8-tent/16-pax luxury tented camp;
- Expand the number of honey and resin associations in target communities in the Eastern Plains, developing appropriate business and marketing plans, and making the connections to markets.

Success Stories

Greater Annamites

- Key next steps have been taken to implement the two new protected areas (Saola Nature Reserve in Thua Thien Hue province and Saola landscape in Quang Nam province) and a 13,500 hectare extension to Bach Ma National Park, which directly contribute to saola conservation. These include the development of a management plan for the Bach Ma extension and feasibility studies for the new saola reserves.

- More than 26,000 signatures from citizens from more than 150 countries in support of saola protection have been collected through online actions of WWF US (CAN) and WWF International (Panda passport).
- Law enforcement has been strengthened to deter wildlife trade including training forest rangers in Thua Thien Hue and Quang Nam provinces in enforcement, mapping, forest restoration and awareness raising techniques. As a result in Hue wildlife trade violations decreased by 30% last year.
- The first ever forest use rights certificate will be issued in Vietnam following the Circular 38/2007/TT-BNN by MARD about “Guidelines for legal procedures of forest allocating, forest hiring, forest withdrawing to apply to organizations, households, individuals, village communities” (expected for September 2008).
- The Chairman of the Quang Nam Provincial Peoples Committee has announced that the province will critically review its plans on hydropower development.

Lower Mekong Dry Forests

- FY08 saw the most progress made so far on developing livelihoods improvement support projects since WWF began working in the Eastern Plains landscape. The fruits of the last few years’ labour on socio-economic surveys and community relations building are starting to emerge with the first tangible economic benefits going to local communities (wild honey marketing);
- The canceling of an illegal 1,000ha concession inside MPF was also highly significant indicating a higher level of political support at the provincial level. Although there are a number of much larger concessions threatening the landscape, there is now a precedent for further similar and positive decisions to be made in the future.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Greater Annamites

Doing research on the saola, including establishing population baselines, is new ground as methods cannot just be copy pasted from research on other species. This is very exciting work, but takes time, requires perseverance and – very importantly – a significant amount of resources and funding which is challenging to secure. To be successful this requires long-term commitment from WWF and partners, but also from donors and in particular perseverance from individual WWF staff members.

The long-term investment into tackling illegal wildlife trade finally pays off. Wildlife trade is very difficult to address, but the relevant enforcement agencies have developed a lot of understanding and expertise on the issue and, which is absolutely crucial, eagerness in combating these illegal activities. The key lesson learned is that constant, very close engagement with the partners (FPD, Environment Police) creates ownership for these issues and ultimately success. Having said this, it is important to highlight that this can only be the beginning in addressing illegal wildlife trade as the problem is massive and drivers for it (e.g. more wealthy Vietnamese to whom it is a status symbol to eat rare wildlife) are gaining force.

As already stated in last year's annual report, it is time-intensive to interact with businesses, e.g. Mars and Alcoa, and establish dialogue and partnerships. Engaging with these companies can not be done with the required attention if this is just another add on to the TOR of staff who are already responsible for delivering on existing projects and programmes. Additional resources are necessary to bring this engagement a step further.

Progress in the Southern Annamites has been slowed down by the fact that not enough resources are available to work on the landscape approach. Current staff time is fully bound to specific projects. Additional resources are needed or existing staff need to be freed up to fully make the next step and move from project to landscape programme implementation.

Lower Mekong Dry Forests

As reported in FY07, the Eastern Plains Dry Forests priority landscape (particularly in Mondulhiri province) continues to experience rapid change due to new development, immigration, land concessions, and many other threats. The upgrading of the main highway from Phnom Penh to Mondulhiri will bring further pressures and threats to the landscape due to the lower traveling times. WWF continues to build strong political support in Mondulhiri, as well as good relationships with communities, both being vitally important to ensure better participation of key stakeholders in decision-making processes. Nevertheless, higher-level political support needs to be secured. Despite the high profile ministerial-level event in Mondulhiri in December 2005 (see FY06 annual report), senior government support to safeguard the Eastern Plains has been disappointing, and therefore a concerted effort is needed in FY09 to turn this around. There is also an urgent need to develop technical capacity within WWF to more effectively approach large mining and hydropower companies.

The WWF/WCS-supported Provincial Conservation Planning Working Group has so far proven to be an effective approach in improving government planning coordination and information sharing. It is helping to improve transparency in decision-making processes by ensuring key issues are discussed in a more 'public' manner. However, the strategy for building political support for conservation and sustainable environmental management, including ensuring local community resource use rights are secured, requires national as well as provincial-level advocacy strategies. Many of the major threats to the landscape are the result of central decision-making.

WWF must seriously consider how we engage in the provinces that adjoin Mondulhiri without undermining the efforts to date or stretching limited resources too thinly. The rationale is that there is risk that the Dry Forests landscape will continue to shrink and be squeezed by forest loss in areas that are not formally protected or designated for sustainable use; this will lead to greater pressure to convert parts of existing protected areas and connecting corridors. In this context, WWF's attempts to engage the Vietnamese authorities have been largely unsuccessful in the last year for reasons as yet unknown. A lack of political will on the Vietnam side of the border is almost certainly a factor plus limited capacity of Cambodian officials to convince their Vietnamese counterparts of the mutual benefits of transboundary collaboration. A clearer political advocacy strategy is therefore required if we are to make progress in FY09.

Subgrantees

None

Annexes

The following materials are attached to this report:

- Draft Map of Infrastructure Development of Southern Annamites and Northeast Cambodia (due to data sensitivities, please do not circulate this map without prior written consent).