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***FORESTS OF THE LOWER MEKONG
ANNUAL REPORT
10/01/2005 - 09/30/2006***

for

World Wildlife Fund

October 17, 2006
Submitted by:
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| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| ADB | Asian Development Bank |
| BCI | Biodiversity Corridors Initiative of the Asian Development Bank |
| CBNRM | Community Based Natural Resource Management |
| CET | Commune Extension Team |
| CR | Community Representative |
| CRES | Center for Research and Environmental Studies |
| DARD | Department of Agriculture and Rural Development |
| DFC | Dry Forest Coalition |
| FGD | Focus Group Discussions |
| FPD | Forest Protection Department |
| GMP | Greater Mekong Program of the World Wildlife Fund |
| GMS | Greater Mekong Subregion Programme of the Asian Development Bank |
| IIED | International Institute for Environment and Development |
| LMDFE | Lower Mekong Dry Forests Ecoregion |
| MAFF | Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Vietnam |
| MARD | Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development |
| MOE | Ministry of Environment, Vietnam |
| MoE | Ministry of the Environment, Vietnam |
| MOM | Management Orientation Monitoring System |
| MONRE | Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment |
| MOSAIC | Management of Strategic Areas for Integrated Conservation |
| NBSAP | National Biodiversity Study and Action Plan |
| NRM | Natural Resources Management |
| NTFP | Non-Timber Forest Products |
| PES | Payment for Environmental Services |
| PLUP | Participatory Land Use Planning |
| PPC | Provincial People's Committee |
| PRA | Participatory Rapid Appraisal |
| RECOFTC | Regional Community Forest Training Center for Asia |
| SCW | Save Cambodia's Wildlife |
| SEA | Socio-economic Assessment |
| SNV | Netherlands Development Organization |
| SWEDCO (Swedish Organization) EIA | Environmental Impact Assessment |
| TFF | Trust Fund for Forests |
| VFTN | Vietnam Forest and Trade Network |
| VTV | Vietnam Television |
| WCS | Wildlife Conservation Society |
| WGE | Working Group on Environment |
| WTO | World Trade Organization |

Forests of the Lower Mekong Project Overview

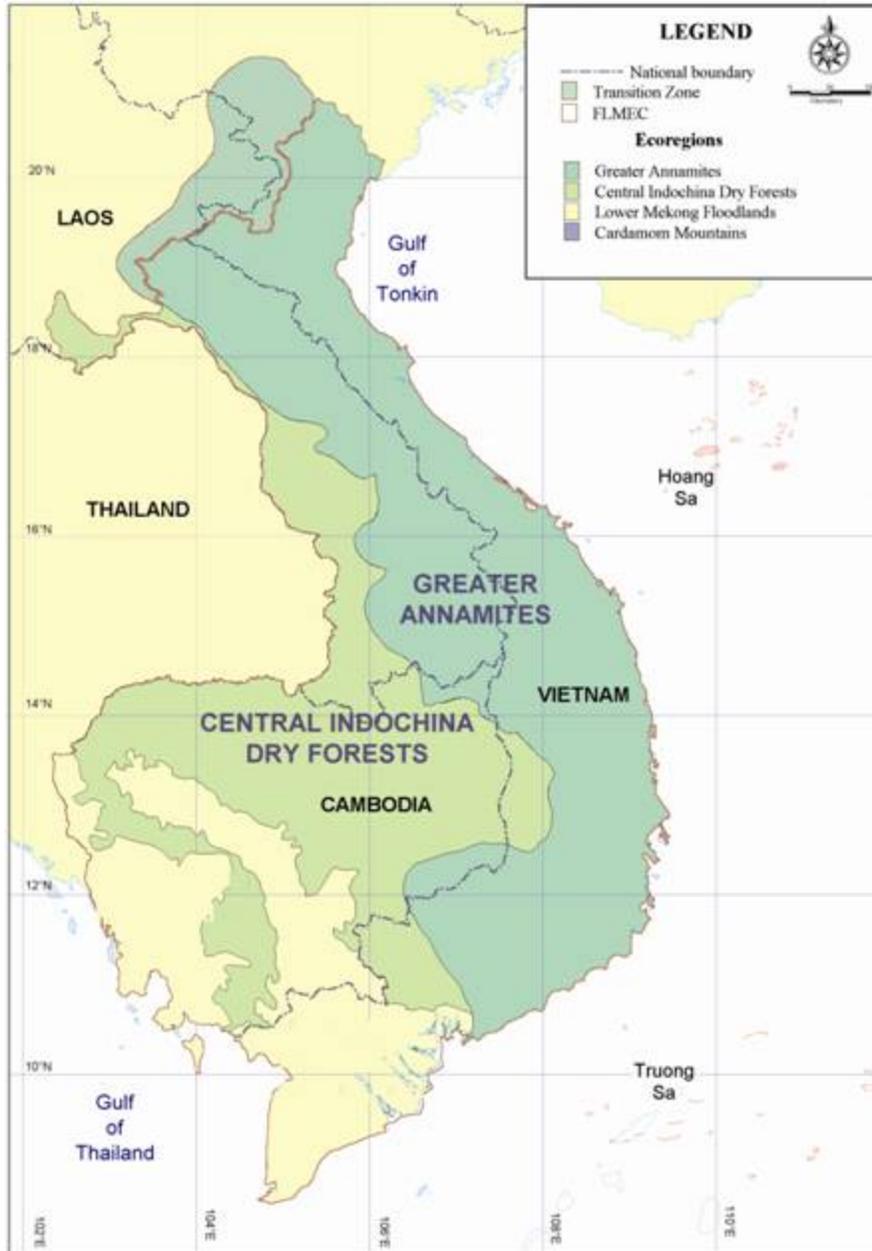
Description of Site

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 which support diverse, abundant, and rare wildlife. In a remarkable indication of the unique status of these ecoregions, six new mammal species—the saola, large-antlered muntjac, Roosevelt’s muntjac, Annamite muntjac, 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 off 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 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 all 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 cover.
- Hunting for local consumption—food, medicine and curio appeal—and for the wildlife trade is having a serious impact on a wide range of species, and is being 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 and infrastructure development, 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 kill wildlife, degrade or destroy aquatic habitat, and poison 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

Over the past year, the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS), a grouping of six countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, and China's Yunnan and Guangxi Provinces), committed to increasing subregional cooperation to accelerate economic development, as facilitated by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The GMS is manifested in economic activity and associated investments in infrastructure development, to be concentrated along three "economic corridors" that crisscross the subregion (from Mawlamyine, Myanmar to Danang, Vietnam; from Kunming, China to Bangkok, Thailand; and from Bangkok to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam). Recognizing the potential negative impacts of corridor development on biodiversity and natural resources, the GMS has also established a Working Group on Environment (WGE), comprising senior government officials from environment and natural resource ministries, of which WWF is also a participant.

Partly as a response to the emergence of regional threats and opportunities posed by GMS, WWF Greater Mekong Programme developed large-scale responses at the same regional scale, addressing mainly the issues of Infrastructure, Agriculture, Timber Trade and Wildlife Trade. 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) represented here in this implementation plan; and driver strategies which 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 issues 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 that threaten 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 encompass:

- Economic valuation of environmental services as a tool to influence resource use decision-making;
- A profit sharing mechanism for natural resources strengthened at the policy level;
- Regional agreements and collaboration on international timber trade and wildlife trade;
- EIA adherence (coordination in dam planning and execution, preventing migration);
- Coordination in GMS planning and construction of roads.

At the site level, GMP pursues the following objectives:

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

The main sites are Quang Nam Province of Central Vietnam (Greater Annamites Ecoregion) and Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuary and Mondulkiri Protected Forest in Cambodia (Dry Forest Ecoregion).

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

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 10/01/05-09/30/06

Greater Annamites Highlights

- WWF developed a provincial-level monitoring system for Quang Nam province that directly links to provincial decision making processes and is fully integrated into the current government monitoring system. A sub-set of indicators in this monitoring process is expected to be used to create ‘State of the Landscape’ reports annually.
- WWF initiated a landscape-scale training programme for nature law enforcement personnel in partnership with WildAid Foundation Thailand. Over 100 rangers from across the Central Annamites were trained. Additionally 8 rangers were trained as trainers.
- WWF completed a management plan for Western Que Son. This is one of the most important lowland forest areas in the landscape. Moreover, a conservation assessment and feasibility study of the area was completed; this was used to secure provincial agreement to designate the area as a Species/Habitat Conservation Area.
- WWF helped complete a comprehensive commune ranger training needs assessment and a set of training courses and lesson plans is being developed for implementation throughout the landscape. These cover Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM), community consultation, PRA, community forest protection support and forest monitoring. The first course will be provided to the rangers and commune officers of the 17 pilot communes in Quang Nam. A partnership with SNV will ensure this training gets combined with forestry training and delivered across six provinces through BCI and TFF funding sources in the future. A provincial community forestry officer has been put in place by FPD Quang Nam to oversee the 17 pilot communes; this officer helped conduct all the above activities and is monitoring and training the commune rangers in these communes.
- WWF established primate (doucs and gibbons) and tiger prey monitoring grids after intensive survey work to identify peaks of abundance of these key species in Hue and Quang Nam. Five grids were established and the first set of data obtained. A further grid is planned for development in Quang Nam, and a further two in Quang Tri province will be established next year through partnerships with CRES and BirdLife.
- WWF has progressed significantly in conserving 2 additional key sites in Quang Nam province: the proposed Ngoc Linh Nature Reserve received provincial government endorsement for establishment after 7 years of impasse and the province sent an official letter to Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) requesting its establishment; Tay Giang Saola area has been proposed for gazettelement as a ‘landscape conservation area’ by the province;
- WWF Vietnam Programme launched the Vietnam Forest and Trade Network (VFTN) - a certification support programme – this year. The VFTN recruited four members amongst wood processing companies and timber traders including ScanCom, one of the largest furniture companies, in its first year;
- Communication materials produced this year include: completion of the Douc film, a 15 minute film on the plight of the douc langur, a critical primate species in Vietnam which will be shown on VTV, Vietnam Central Television Channel, this year.

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 sites in the Central Annamites

- Funding secured for a Central Annamites Landscape implementation and coordination mechanism and implementation will begin in late 2006 before the close of the FY06 grant.
- A provincial-level monitoring system has been developed for Quang Nam province that directly links to provincial decision making processes and is fully integrated into the current government monitoring system. A sub-set of indicators in this monitoring process is expected to be used to create 'State of the Landscape' reports annually.

A landscape-scale training programme for nature law enforcement personnel has been initiated in partnership with WildAid Foundation Thailand. Over 100 rangers from across the Central Annamites have been trained. Additionally 8 rangers have been trained as trainers. An important material source is the training guide, Primate Conservation in Quang Nam Province, used to train rangers on identifying primates in the landscape.



Enforcement Training (1): Rangers from Quang Nam Forest Protection Department practicing navigation skills during a 14 day law enforcement training course held by WWF in conjunction with WildAid Foundation Thailand.

- A management plan for Western Que Son has been completed. This is one of the most important lowland forest areas in the landscape. In addition, a conservation assessment and feasibility study of the area has been completed; this was used to secure provincial agreement to designate the area as a Species/Habitat Conservation Area.



Elephant Monitoring in Que Son: Rangers from Que Son sub-Forest Protection Department Measuring an elephant track as part of a monitoring programme in the proposed 'Western Que Son Elephant Conservation Landscape'.

- Conservation of 3 key sites in Quang Nam province: Que Son (see above; the proposed Ngoc Linh Nature Reserve received provincial government endorsement for establishment after 7 years of impasse and the province sent an official letter to MARD to request it be established; Tay Giang Saola area is proposed for gazettement as a 'landscape conservation area' by the province.
- A comprehensive commune ranger training needs assessment has been completed and a set of training courses and lesson plans are being developed for implementation throughout the landscape. These cover CBNRM, community consultation, PRA, community forest protection support and forest monitoring. The first course will be provided to the rangers and commune officers of the 17 pilot communes in Quang Nam. A partnership with SNV was secured that will ensure these trainings get combined with forestry trainings and delivered across six provinces through BCI and TFF funding sources in the future. A provincial community forestry officer was put in place by FPD Quang Nam to oversee the 17 pilot communes; this officer helped to conduct all the above activities and is monitoring and training the commune rangers in these communes.

Activity I.1.2.: Protect key species in the Annamites

Primate (doucs and gibbons) and tiger prey monitoring grids were established after intensive survey work to identify peaks of abundance of these key species in Hue and Quang Nam. Five grids are established and the first set of data obtained. A further grid is planned for development in Quang Nam and a further two in Quang Tri province will be established next year through partnerships with CRES and BirdLife.

Species Monitoring Work: Rangers from the Quang Nam Forest Protection Department watch a group of the endemic and critically endangered grey-shanked doucs during a monitoring survey



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

Policy Work

To mitigate the most urgent, broad scale pressures on biodiversity in the ecoregion in 2005/6 WWF Vietnam established a 'policy unit'. To address these wider policy issues WWF Vietnam established new partnerships and ventured into multi-sectoral discussions with a wide range of private and public sectors groups.

Based on the needs of the Vietnam program and ongoing projects, WWF Viet Nam decided to concentrate on five streams of work. The identified themes were: *sustainable agriculture, sustainable aquaculture, sustainable financing, sustainable livelihoods and sustainable development*. It was felt that by establishing these key themes we would be able to deliver on all outputs. With three new staff hired, the policy unit is now firmly established and working across all programs and projects within WWF Vietnam and the wider WWF-GMP area. *For more information on the projects please visit the WWF Vietnam policy webpage.*

Good progress is being made in delivering on the outputs and introducing the activities. In fact, some progress was made in policy areas that were unforeseen a year ago:

- In the area of agriculture the focus of this work has been on sustainable cocoa production in the Southern Annamites landscape, close to Cat Tien National Park. A provincial workshop facilitated by WWF brought together producers, buyers (MARS, Cargill and Olam), research institutes and the government to look at the sustainable production of cocoa in Lam Dong. With these stakeholders WWF is planning to move into the next phase of introducing sustainable cocoa production into the province. Some of the analysis from this work highlighted the growing problem of cashew expansion into Cat Tien National Park. As a response, the agricultural team will look to introduce solutions to this growing threat. Finally the agricultural team has also identified sugar as an important commodity to focus on, and they completed a report on its current state in Vietnam.
- Another key focus area for the policy team is issues of infrastructure, in particular dams, which are impacting some of our priority sites. There have been varied degrees of success and frustration. WWF Vietnam worked closely with ADB, mainly through the SWEDCO EIA, to minimize the impact of the SBIV dam on Song Thanh nature reserve. After prolonged discussions, in which we requested to be part of the Advisory Group for SB IV, our request was turned down. However, we continue to be involved in the SB IV EIA as well as a broader cumulative assessment of the four proposed dams in the area. We are discussing with ADB consultants the possibility of using the A Vuong Dam to test a ‘transfer payments’ mechanism, where a small part of the monies earned from electricity generation is used for environmental and social projects. ADB is currently in discussions with EVN on the introduction of such a mechanism as part of their power sector reform process. WWF will continue to work with ADB and EVN in this basin and in the Southern Annamites landscape. Direct discussions with EVN have proved less fruitful, and we have found that working through ADB may be our best means to influence EVN.



A Vuong Dam

- Work on Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs) is not as far advanced as hoped. SEAs of socio-economic plans will be carried out as part of the ADB-BCI project, the Green Corridor Project, as well as a marine project in Con Doa. However, none of the three has yet been carried out, mainly due to problems with permits. The expectation is that this work will take place in 2007/8. The support from USAID has provided us with the opportunity to engage in a wider discussion group on SEA in Vietnam. A SEA working group which includes the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment and donors including the ADB and World Bank, exchanges experiences and provides training to government staff on SEA. WWF is part of this group.
- Finally, we carried out an assessment of the environmental and social impacts of mining. This further highlighted the growing problem in Quang Nam and the need to address it. As a result of this study a further regional proposal is to be developed. It is clear that WWF Vietnam needs to scale up its activities on mining in 2007.

Activity I.2.2.: Promote payment mechanisms for environmental management

WWF Vietnam was very active in developing work in the area of sustainable financing. We hired an environmental economist to take this work forward, and one of the first tasks was to collate potential Payment for Environmental Services (PES) schemes which could be introduced in Vietnam. Eight different schemes were identified, including establishing payment schemes to upland communities in Lam Dong Province to protect watersheds and establishing eco-tourism sites on Cu Lao Cham Island in Quang Nam Province. For more information on each of the schemes, please visit the policy web site, under sustainable financing.

In 2005/6 three schemes received support: promoting shade grown cocoa in Lam Dong province; sustainable financing in and around Bach Ma National Park, and payment schemes for clean water along the Dong Nai. Support for each of these is secure, but they are at very early stages and implementation will begin in earnest at the end of 2006/7.

WWF Viet Nam has also sought to enhance understanding of the issue of PES schemes in the region. On August 28-29, WWF Vietnam hosted a PES workshop with over 20 participants from across Asia. WWF will also partner with MONRE to hold a workshop on PES in Vietnam.

The new environmental economist is tasked to work across the different divisions of WWF, in particular the forest and marine programmes. With the forest program the focus was on looking at the value of NTFPs, and for the marine program looking at the whole issue of trust funds.

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

With support pending under the ADB-BCI to establish the Central Annamites coordination unit, efforts in 2006 also looked to other landscapes, already identified as part of the biodiversity assessment of the forests of the lower Mekong. The southern landscape covering the Southern Annamites montane block and the lowland Dong Nai watershed was chosen as the next priority area. Lessons and successes from the Central Annamites would be replicated in this new landscape. WWF has experience in working in this area, particularly around the Cat Tien National Park project.

In the Southern Annamites a large USAID funded project on biodiversity corridors and landscape conservation is being introduced by Winrock International. They are currently conducting an initial biodiversity assessment of the area; as well as a socio-economic assessment of the alternatives. WWF saw this as an opportunity to look at existing projects and to plan future projects around this landscape vision so that the groups can compliment one another and have the greatest impact in the landscape.

WWF Vietnam has had little follow up on working with the Vietnamese Government to adopt the plan for the Greater Annamites. Having already adopted the Central Truong Son strategy, the government awaits results before they scale up to this much larger area. Clearly in Vietnam the largest scale to work at is the landscape level. Only success in a number of landscapes will guarantee government support for a full ecoregional action plan.

Activity I.3.2: Develop and strengthen the Central Annamites Conservation Initiative

In 2006 WWF expected to receive the large ADB-BCI project which aims to replicate the MOSAIC activities across two provinces in the broader Central Annamites landscape. A part of this is the establishment of the Central Annamites coordination unit. However, given problems with permissions it is unlikely this will start until 2007.

Funding secured for a Central Annamites Landscape implementation and coordination mechanism and implementation will begin in late 2006 before the close of the FY06 grant

A provincial-level monitoring system was developed for Quang Nam province that directly links to provincial decision making processes and is fully integrated into the current government monitoring system. A sub-set of indicators in this monitoring process is expected to be used to create 'State of the Landscape' reports annually.

Activity I.3.3: Engage broader stakeholder support through advocacy-based communications in the Greater Annamites

Because of reduced funding available for outreach and education in FY06, this was less of a focus of activities. However, WWF continued to distribute existing publications, films, and other outreach materials. WWF communications staff, project staff, and our environmental education officer will continue to promote and raise awareness of the Greater Annamites ecoregion. We did, however, produce some leaflets and papers highlighting the progress and lessons learnt from our projects. For the MOSAIC project a leaflet entitled ‘*Local To Landscape: Conservation And Community Based Forest Management In Quang Nam*’. This was distributed to a wide range of experts, academics, donors and WWF staff.

The film series on Douc langurs with Vietnam Television (VTV) and the Endangered Primate Rescue Center was finally completed. The film will be broadcast on national television to raise awareness widely (See Annex 1).

Progress Table

| | Indicators (what you are measuring) | Baseline (Value and date of measurement) | Current status (Value and Date) 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 | - Tracking tools for priority areas | Zero competence | -Enforcement competencies reached by 54 Quang Nam rangers | Green |
| | - Ranger competency assessments | | - CBNRM competencies being developed | Green |
| | Index of primate and tiger prey abundance | Baseline assessments conducted and currently being formulated | Baseline still being formulated | Green |
| Activity 1.1.1 & 1.1.2: Protect key sites and species in the Annamites | - Tracking tools for priority areas | Zero competence | -Enforcement competencies reached by 54 Quang Nam rangers | Green |
| | - Ranger competency assessments | | - CBNRM competencies being developed | Green |

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|---|--|--|---|--------------|
| | Index of primate and tiger prey abundance | Baseline assessments conducted and currently being formulated | Baseline still being formulated | Green |
| Objective 1.2: Mitigate the most urgent, broad scale pressures on biodiversity in the ecoregion | | | | Green |
| Activity 1.2.1 Address immediate and apparent threats to biodiversity at the national and regional levels in the Greater Annamites | -Policy team established | -No policy team in place in 2005/6 | All completed and continuing | Green |
| | -Engagement on dam developments with ADB and EVN | -No engagement on dams in Vietnam | Discussions taking place at regional level | Amber |
| | -working on 2/3 agricultural commodities | -No work on agriculture | Will be initiated this year | Red |
| Activity 1.2.2 Promote payment mechanisms for environmental management | -PES training workshop held | -No WWF PES schemes supported in Vietnam | All completed and ongoing | Green |
| | -PES schemes introduced to Vietnam | - Designed but not initiated | | Red |
| Objective 1.3 Harness local, national, and international support for long-term conservation of the ecoregion | | | | Amber |
| Activity 1.3.1 Extend capacity to mobilize and manage large-scale conservation | -office in the southern Annamites established | -Neither existed in Vietnam | The office in the South established | Amber |
| | -establishment on CTS co-ordination unit | | The CTS co-op unit is waiting on agreed ADB-BCI funds | |
| Activity 1.3.2: Develop and strengthen the Central Annamites Conservation Initiative | - In place waiting for BCI funds to be processed | No largescale funding for coordination of landscape conservation | To be implemented this year | Amber |
| Activity 1.3.3: Engage broader stakeholder support through advocacy-based communications in the Greater Annamites | -Douc film finished and aired on TV | | All completed and ongoing | Green |

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|--|---------------------------------|--|--|--|
| | -greater Annamites publications | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|--|--|--|

Next Steps

Activity 1.1.1

- Support the production of a management plan for Bach Ma National Park including its new extension
- Support the establishment of the ‘Saola Sanctuary’ in Thue Thien Hue province.

Activity 1.2.1

- Within the sustainable agriculture work-stream, develop a partnership with an international company to jointly work on sustainable cocoa in Vietnam
- Undertake a project to look at the likely impacts of Vietnam’s accession to WTO.

Activity 1.3.1

- The ADB-BCI project receives permission and commences in early 2007
- A multi-stakeholder group, including WWF, agrees on a plan for the Southern Annamites

Activity 1.3.2

- Implement a monitoring mechanism for the landscape, based at the provincial level that links conservation and development strategies.

Activity 1.3.3

- Produce a brochure on the Central Annamites landscape, documenting the activities implemented to date and highlighting some of the ingredients of successful landscape conservation;

Success Stories

- WWF Viet Nam helped provide input into different aspects of the biodiversity law and put together the first draft of the World Bank’s flagship environmental publication which this year was on the topic of ‘biodiversity’.
- We established the first policy team in the region. Areas of work include improving livelihoods through sustainable agriculture with a focus on cocoa and aquaculture, sustainable financing, and sustainable development.
- WWF Viet Nam held a national workshop on sustainable agriculture in South East Asia.
- We established a presence in a new landscape – the Southern Annamites - which will build on the lessons and successes of our work in the Central Annamites.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

One of the most painful lessons has been the need to build in greater flexibility if projects do not come online when expected. The ADB-BCI, which officially began earlier this year, is going through the final stages of acceptance. Given the fact this is quite a substantial grant, efforts on fundraising for the area were not undertaken. This has left us in a difficult situation, hopefully for only a few months.

There is considerable interest and support from other groups and donors for us to work on policy issues, and venture into areas such as agriculture, infrastructure and sustainable financing

Subgrantees

None

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); Department of Nature Conservation and Protection (DNCP) and Monduliri Provincial Environment Departments;
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF); Forestry Administration (FA); Department of Fisheries (DoF).
- Ministry of Urbanization, Land Management, and Construction; Monduliri Provincial Department of Urbanization, Land Management, and Construction
- Ministry of Tourism; Monduliri Provincial Department of Tourism
- Ministry of Interior; Monduliri Provincial Government Office

Government of Lao PDR

- Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (Department of Forestry)
- Science, Technology and Environment Agency (STEA)

International NGOs

- Birdlife International
- Cat Action Treasury
- Conservation International (CI)
- Fauna and Flora International
- International Development Research Center (IDRC)
- IUCN
- TRAFFIC Indochina Program (SE Asia)
- Oxfam US
- WildAid
- Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)

Summary: Period 10/01/05—09/30/06

Lower Mekong Dry Forest Highlights

In the Lower Mekong Dry Forests, USAID support has catalyzed significant progress and achievements within the Eastern Plains Dry Forests priority landscape.

- WWF completed the Dry Forests Ecoregion Conservation Plan and a WWF ecoregion conservation action plan for the Dry Forests, providing a tool for making strategic interventions based on clear targets and strategies, and to mobilize additional support to deliver targets for the conservation of Dry Forests biodiversity in line with national sustainable development goals;
- WWF has strengthened management of Srepok Wilderness Area project within the Monduliri Protected Forest through new infrastructure, new personnel, additional training, and draft management plan;

- WWF Cambodia Programme initiated a partnership with ADB for a pilot project, in order to build coordinated planning at the landscape level, which is vitally important for our efforts towards landscape conservation of the Dry Forests;
- WWF organized a large public event in Mondulhiri province (12 December 2005) to highlight the global importance of the Eastern Plains Dry Forests Landscape, and more specifically the protected area complex it contains. This provided the opportunity for the ministers of the two key responsible environmental and natural resource management ministries to make public statements of commitment to conservation and sustainable development in the landscape.
- WWF released the Biovision for the Lower Mekong Dry Forests demonstrating to government and NGO partners, and other donors, the credibility of the prioritization process, and helping to further awareness about the value of the Dry Forests.
- Continuation of WWF's species and wildlife work in the landscape resulted in the discovery of a nearby hog deer population, the only known population outside India. This led to convincing the government to approve a hog deer conservation area around 50,000 ha for community conservation and management.
- WWF promoted valuable exchange visits to Namibia by community representatives (USAID funding not used for government officials) to learn from local communities who are closely involved in monitoring wildlife and natural resource use for their own benefit. The lessons learned will be adapted for implementation starting in mid-FY07.
- A number of communications and awareness raising materials were produced, and other communications opportunities created in FY06, including:
 - Production of updated WWF Cambodia fact sheets highlighting importance of WWF project sites, project backgrounds, and project objectives. These fact sheets were produced in English and Khmer, and form part of WWF Lower Mekong Dry Forests Ecoregion Communication Package, widely circulated to hundreds of participants during the high profile Dry Forests Conservation Event in Mondulhiri province in December 2005 (See Annexes 2-6).
 - Press Releases – on Cambodian Eastern Plains Protected Area Management Event in December 05 and another produced in June 2005 related to the SWA project study visit to Namibia. This news was also reproduced in the WWF Cambodia, GMP, and WWF International network newsletters.
 - WWF held a small awareness raising seminar for one of the local international schools, and Cambodian radio journalists.
 - WWF Dry Forests project staff profiled on Cambodian national TV and radio programs.
 - The documentary film for the SWA and Eastern Plains PA Complex event, which will be completed by end of September 2006.

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

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

As the priority landscape for the Lower Mekong Dry Forests Ecoregion, the Eastern Plains Dry Forests was the focus in FY06 of efforts to secure the landscape's connectivity and protection. Within the landscape, WWF is concentrating on Mondulhiri province, the single most important

province within the landscape and the entire ecoregion. Long term conservation success in this province is imperative as the potential for conservation of large intact habitat blocks and the species within them is highest here than anywhere else. Work in FY06 continued to focus on two protected areas: Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuary, and Mondulkiri Protected Forest, and the corridors between them. Both of these protected areas, as well as the other four in the province, are facing increasing pressure from infrastructure development, agricultural expansion and immigration.

In order to tackle these issues, WWF has been working to secure more concrete commitments from the key natural resource ministries with jurisdiction in the province - the Ministry of Environment (MoE) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (MAFF). Cooperation between ministries is fundamental to ensuring a coordinated approach to addressing the key threats in the landscape through integrated and collaborative landscape planning, improved protected area management, and improved community livelihoods, including ecotourism development and sustainable forest development. Two key activities in FY06 have provided impetus towards achieving these commitments. In December 2005, a high profile event in the landscape provided the opportunity for the two key ministries (MoE and MAFF) to voice the government's support to improving protected area management in the landscape. As a result of the event, the MoE increased by 30% the number of rangers in Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuary. And in January 2006, WWF began a three-year ADB-funded project that is designed to improve coordination at the provincial level on conservation and development planning. This project has come about in part due to WWF's success in the landscape in the last five years, our ability to build partnerships at all levels, and the overall emphasis on promoting the need for landscape-scale planning. It is a partnership between the government, WWF, and WCS, and is led by WWF.

With USAID support, WWF provided programmatic support to achieve the following specific results:

- WWF produced draft management plans for the Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuary (under MoE), and Mondulkiri Protected Forest (under MAFF) in preparation for the development of international standard plans in FY07.
- Establishment of line transects for monitoring wild cattle in the MPF. Monitoring methodology will take at least one year from now to establish given the complexities and rigor required for establishing statistically accurate methods, and for staff training.
- Dry Forests Protected Area Management Event in Mondulkiri in December 2005, represented by three ministers, donors, NGOs, and local communities.

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

The Srepok Wilderness Area Project (SWAP) is the flagship project for the LMDFE. The project is focused within Mondulkiri Protected Forest (MPF) which is the largest protected area in Cambodia, and in the heart of the Eastern Plains Dry Forests landscape, within Mondulkiri province. The project began a new phase in FY06 with preparation activities for focused community extension activities over the next three years. This work has involved extensive socio-economic surveys in three target community clusters that surround MPF. These surveys are crucial to understanding the local community needs, and this data will inform the design of

appropriate management objectives for the protected area, taking into account local resource use needs.

This CBNRM work complements the ongoing protected area management component of the project. In FY06, the project built on the previous two years of infrastructure development and staff capacity building. In particular, efforts focused on providing additional field ranger training. This was done in cooperation with CI and WCS. In addition, preparations began on the feasibility study and plan for ecotourism development within the MPF.



Dry Forest meets Riparian habitat in Srepok Wilderness Area

USAID support was used to provide overall assistance to the design of the project's CBNRM activities, PA management improvement, and ecotourism development activities, which have resulted in the following achievements for FY06:

- Established a Community Extension Team to lead the CBNRM activities within the SWAP;
- Socio-economic data collected in 15 villages covering 8 communes around the MPF. 593 households or (73%) of the targets were surveyed. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted in 12 villages participated in by a total of 296 community members, 39% of which were women, and an average number of participants of 30 per FGD. In one indicative village in Pu Chrey commune, data show that:
 - 38% of village members are regularly engaged in hunting activities inside the MPF, and 13% of hunting is for wildlife trade;
 - 73% of new settlers are from another province;
 - 83% of households take wood from the forest for firewood;
 - 45% of respondents are planting soybeans in their chamkar (shifting cultivation plots) – this is a new cash crop in the area.
- Basic field ranger training conducted for 25 rangers. This is the second time this course has been run and individual staff improvement in the various components taught was tested, measured, and monitored.
- Tourism feasibility study preparation – project staff met with government, private sector tour operators, and other NGOs to begin assessment of Cambodian tourism sector. Economic modeling support was provided by project partner IIED, and tourism surveys have begun in cooperation with a research project from Umeå University, Sweden.

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 Forests of the Lower Mekong

The Lower Mekong Dry Forests Ecoregion (LMDFE) Conservation Plan was finalized in November 2005, and the WWF Dry Forests Conservation Action Plan in March 2006. The LMDFE conservation plan has been revised and adapted to fit with the Lao Government's request to combine the LMDFE plan with the previously completed Greater Annamites (Saiphou Louang in Laos) plan into the nationally endorsed NBSAP (National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan) format. In Cambodia, the process of submitting the plan to the government has been delayed due to the time required to analyze the jurisdictional implications of a national conservation plan designed for joint endorsement by the two main environmental ministries. Efforts in the last year have also been focused heavily on ensuring effective site-level interventions in the Eastern Plains, and time has been spent mitigating a number of new threats. The conservation plan is currently being prepared for submission, and this is expected in the first quarter of FY07.

The decision has been made not to focus attention on the Dry Forests Coalition (DFC) at the present time. This is based on analysis that indicates an inability of the DFC to foster cooperation between the two main ministries who were given co-chairmanship. This is due to the ongoing conflict between the two ministries as a result of unclear mandates and lack of clear ministry-level institutional roles and responsibilities. Experience in the last year has shown that the most effective mechanism for coordinating action on certain key issues has been through a combination of local partnership building and advocacy, coupled with targeted advocacy at the national level. We have had several successes during FY06 following this approach and have not needed to use a national level forum to bring about change. The concept of the DFC is still important, and further analysis will be undertaken to assess the most appropriate means of bringing together and influencing national level decision makers. For the time being, we will continue to use the approach as described above.

Key achievements in FY06 include the following:

- Influence on government to push ADB for inclusion of Eastern Plains Landscape as site for pilot phase of Biodiversity Conservation Corridors Initiative project.
- Success in influencing government to reject a proposal for a Spanish-based safari hunting company to begin surveys inside the MPF.
- Several formal requests from Mondulhiri Provincial Governor to WWF to provide technical advice on the following issues:
 - continuing immigration problem along the province's major newly upgraded inter-provincial highway;
 - key issues for transboundary cooperation between Cambodia and Vietnam;
 - formation of a provincial level ecotourism development committee.

- Agreement by provincial government for a WWF-WCS supported technical advisor to be placed in an influential position within the province's decision making bodies (funded by ADB).
- Development of provincial level 'agreement' in preparation for full local decree that clearly states government law related to natural resource use inside the MPF.

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

General awareness raising and more targeted communication activities have been ongoing throughout the last year. One of the main activities was the Eastern Plains Protected Area event in Monduliri province in December 2005 that has already been described.

Specifically, the following communication and awareness raising materials were produced, and other communication opportunities created in FY06, including:

- Production of updated WWF Cambodia fact sheets highlighting importance of WWF project sites, project backgrounds, and project objectives. These fact sheets were produced in English and Khmer, and form part of WWF Lower Mekong Dry Forests Ecoregion Communication Package that was widely circulated to hundreds of participants during the high profile Dry Forests Conservation Event in Monduliri province in December 2005 (See Annexes 2-6).
- Press Release produced on Cambodian Eastern Plains Protected Area Management Event in December 05 and another produced in June 2005 related to the SWA project study visit to Namibia. This news was also reproduced in the WWF Cambodia, GMP, and WWF International network newsletters.
- WWF held a small awareness raising seminar for one of the local international schools, and Cambodian radio journalists.
- WWF Dry Forests project staff were profiled on Cambodian national TV and radio programs.
- The documentary film for the SWA and Eastern Plains PA Complex event

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

Now a key focus of the project, work began in earnest in FY06 to engage with local communities that inhabit three main areas around the Monduliri Protected Forest (MPF). Three community clusters have been identified in the northern, western, and southern parts of MPF. Socio-economic surveys began in order to increase understanding of community resource use needs, as well as to begin the process of identifying key community representatives as the focus for capacity building initiatives to empower their participation in land use planning and decision making, as well as involvement in future tourism development planning.

In the first step towards increasing direct community involvement in natural resource management (in addition to the current employment opportunities provided for former hunters and poachers from surrounding communities), additional funds were sought to enable Cambodian project staff to visit successful community-based project sites in Namibia, Southern Africa. In June and July 2006, Cambodian government and community staff members of the Srepok Wilderness Area project visited Namibia on a three week study visit to some of the country's national parks and community conservation areas. A large part of the visit was spent observing community wildlife guards undertake a half-year review of their monitoring activities, and in discussions with communities and local WWF staff on how to adapt the approach in Namibia for the Cambodian context (WWF have implemented this project in Namibia for many years with USAID support).



Cambodian government and community staff members of the Srepok Wilderness Area project exchanging ideas with a Namibian

The visit has catalyzed the required next steps to develop the required materials and capacity in Cambodia to begin piloting a similar community-based monitoring methodology for the SWAP by January 2007. This is all part of the initiative to use the lessons learned in Southern Africa, and apply the relevant models in Cambodia and further afield.

The planned tourism benefit sharing mechanism development has been delayed slightly until mid-FY07 to enable further capacity building.

CBNRM activities in the landscape in FY06 focused on training community representatives in conducting PLUP (Participatory Land Use Planning) in their own communities. Work also continued on supporting the establishment of NRM committees in target villages. These committees fit within the already established local governance framework and are in line with the government's 'deconcentration and decentralization' policy. The aim is for local level NRM committees to have the capacity to represent their communities in decision making processes about natural resource use and land allocation issues in their traditional areas.

Specific achievements in FY06 include the following:

- Exchange visit to Namibia for Cambodian field staff to learn about the success of implementing MOMS (Management Oriented Monitoring System) in the conservancies of Northeast Namibia, and preliminary work undertaken in Cambodia to adapt the Namibian model for the Cambodian context.
- Establishment and training of mixed provincial PLUP team, for implementing PLUP throughout Pu Chrey commune.
- Selection of community representatives in 4 villages of Pou Chrey commune.

- Stakeholder workshop, resulting in government establishment of mixed working group to eliminate land encroachment in the Pu Chrey corridor.
- Identifying present land use of local community, agriculture land (rice field and crop land) in Pu Tang village, Pu Chrey commune, Pichrada district (ongoing).
- Election of NRM Committees in target villages of Sre Thom and Khnheng.
- Capacity building and awareness raising on Resource Rights and Responsibilities of local community to Community Representatives (CR), Commune Extension Team (CET) and NRM Committees in target villages (Sre Thom, Khnheng, including 4 villages of Pu Chrey commune) in cooperation with Save Cambodia's Wildlife (SCW).

Progress Table

| | Indicators (what you are measuring) | Baseline (Value and date of measurement) | Current status (Value and Date) with discussion of any variance | Success rating (green, amber or red) |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| Goal level | | | | |
| Objective II.1: Conserve species, habitats, and their interactions | | | | Green |
| Activity II.1.1: Landscape-scale conservation in the Eastern Plains Dry Forests | Completion of Dry Forests Conservation Plan and WWF Action Plan through stakeholder consultation | No specific plan to date | Completed, but not yet approved by Govt. | Amber |
| Activity II.1.3: Develop and strengthen the Srepok Wilderness Area Project | Increased management capacity in MPF | 25 rangers in place but untrained | 25 rangers in place, trained, equipped and undertaking patrolling and monitoring | Green |
| Objective II.2: Capacity building of local, national, and international stakeholders to plan long-term biodiversity conservation in the Dry Forest Ecoregion | | | | Green |

| | Indicators (what you are measuring) | Baseline (Value and date of measurement) | Current status (Value and Date) with discussion of any variance | Success rating (green, amber or red) |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| Goal level | | | | |
| Activity II.2.1: Extend capacity to mobilize and manage large-scale conservation across the Forests of the Lower Mekong | Commitments by government for landscape scale conservation approach New or improved legislation for NRM | No landscape approaches in EP landscape Inadequate local level legislation | Commitment by national and provincial government for landscape scale project New 'provincial announcement' issued in FY06 | Green |
| Activity (Output) Activity II.2.2: Build awareness and effective communication on conservation | communications and awareness raising materials, events, and opportunities | Inadequate communications and awareness raising materials and events | EP Dry Forests event in December 2005 Press releases, radio interviews, film produced | Green |
| Objective II.3: Protect priority landscapes and corridors through sustainable use of forest resources, sustainable agriculture, and forest restoration | | | | Green |
| Activity (Output) 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 | Mechanisms for community participation in NRM | Inadequate or nonexistent mechanisms in place for communities to participate in NRM decision making | Cambodian participation in learning exchange visit to Namibia Establishment of NRM committees in priority villages | Green |

Next Steps

Approval of the Dry Forests Conservation Plan by national governments remains a high priority. Given the importance of sustainability and ownership required for the approval of any conservation plan or management strategy, emphasis is needed on institutional arrangements for monitoring progress against the Dry Forests plan once it is endorsed at the national level.

The landscape conservation approach being designed for implementation in the Eastern Plains Dry Forests is now the primary focus for all Dry Forests conservation activities in Cambodia. With good government and NGO partnerships in place, and excellent relations with decision makers, there is very good potential for significant progress to be made towards coordinated development planning at the landscape (provincial scale). At the same time however, the threats to the integrity of the landscape have never been as great as they currently are. The government, at all levels, is under great pressure from within the government itself, and from foreign governments, private sector investors, and multi-lateral institutions, to develop the province (Mondulkiri). Therefore, FY07 is a critical year to set precedents, and to establish best practices in coordination between key government departments and local communities for decision making on conservation, NRM, and development planning.

Success Stories

For the Lower Mekong Dry Forests Ecoregion programme, the following main success stands out for FY06:

The Eastern Plains Dry Forests Protected Areas Event in December 2005 was an important event and significant for several reasons. Firstly, it provided a rare opportunity for the Ministers of Environment, and Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, to be seen together in public both speaking about government commitment to biodiversity conservation in the Dry Forests. Secondly, it was a unique event in that local communities had never been invited to participate in such a high profile event related to NRM and conservation in this particular part of the country. Thirdly, significant media attention surrounded the event, both in the national press, and internationally (the BBC World Service covered the event).

Problems and Constraints

As mentioned above already, the Eastern Plains Dry Forests priority landscape (particularly in Mondulkiri province) is experiencing rapid change due to new developments, immigration, land concessions and many other threats. The fact that at present almost 80% of the provincial area is under some form of legal protection is both a blessing and a curse. It is a blessing because we are starting from a good position: habitats are intact, well connected, and legally protected. It is a curse because government agencies (and potential national and international investors) see the huge development potential. Despite the massive pressures (hydropower, agriculture, extractive industries), WWF is well placed to positively influence development decision making, as long as relations are maintained, and governments openly share information in a timely manner. At the same time, we must be realistic about what future changes we can influence, and in this way it is essential that we stick with the plans for improving government coordination mechanisms, while remaining committed to the extensive conservation planning and biodiversity visioning processes that have been undertaken in the last few years.

Lessons Learned

The Dry Forests Coalition (DFC) has not delivered on previous expectations. It has not been able to foster cooperation between the two main ministries who were given co-chairmanship, as was originally envisaged. This is due to the ongoing conflict between the two ministries as a result of their unclear mandates and lack of clear ministry-level institutional roles and responsibilities. Experience in the last year has shown that the most effective mechanism for coordinating action

on certain key issues has been through a combination of local partnership building and advocacy, coupled with targeted advocacy at the national level. We have had several successes during FY06 following this approach and have not needed to use a national level forum to bring about change.

Subgrantees

None

List of Annexes

1. *Doucs of Vietnam* (15-minute video on separate CD)
2. *Mondulkiri Protected Forest Srepok Wilderness Area Project Fact Sheet*
3. *Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuary (PPWS) Fact Sheet*
4. *Asia-Pacific Ecoregion Action Programmes: Lower Mekong Dry Forest Fact Sheet*
5. *Management of Strategic Areas for Integrated Conservation (MOSAIC-EP) Fact Sheet*
6. *WWF Cambodia Conservation Programme Fact Sheet*
7. *Primate Conservation in Quang Nam Province, Central Viet Nam* (attached in print format only)