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## USAID Conservation of Central American Watersheds Program

### **PRODUCT NO. 3**

**Development of a Forest Inventory and Management Plan covering at least 2,000 hectares, in accordance with international standards (FSC and CATIE Methodology for tropical forests)**

Grant Agreement No.: 406FO-APS01-SATI



The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) or the United States Government.

## Grant Activities

### **Training on the methodology for conducting forest inventory in Conejo**

On June 10, 2008 the first forest inventory training was conducted in Conejo. The four persons selected from Conejo to participate in the training were Marcos Coc, Pablo Makin, Marcos Makin, and Catarino Makin. Two additional participants from Sunday Wood: Sebastian Tush and Manuel Shol also participated in the training. The topics covered under the training included:

- Identifying sampling plots on a map (using GPS, compass)
- Establishment of sampling plots (using compass and measuring tapes)
- Identification and measurement of tree species (using diametric tape)
- Recording of inventory (special data sheet)

The groups were also introduced to various equipments and tools used when conducting forest inventory. The participants had a practical exercise using the equipments prior to entering the forest.

### **Training on the methodology for conducting forest inventory in Santa Teresa**

On June 12, 2008 a similar training to the above mentioned was conducted in Santa Teresa. The four participants identified by the community to participate in the training were: Jacinto Max, Pablo Ack, Jose Max, and Martin Sam. As was the case in Conejo the same power point presentation was delivered to the participants. It was stressed to them that it is very important that they learn the methodology since they will be the ones conducting the inventory. In some instances SATIIM's Gis Analyst explained parts of the methodology in Q'eqchi in order for them to have a clearer understanding.

### **Forest inventory completed in Conejo**

The forest inventory in Conejo went according to plan. The Baquianos, Mr. Carlos Chi and Santiago Coy were both stationed in the resource centre in Conejo. The inventory began on June 11<sup>th</sup> and ended on June 18<sup>th</sup> totaling 8 days. SATIIM's Gis Analyst along with Mr. Salazar participated in the initial data collection within the Forest. While the Baquianos were stationed at the resource centre, food items were provided to them and a cook was also hired. During this time, SATIIM's staff made daily visits to Conejo to check the progress made and ensure that the Baquianos were okay addressing any concerns they raise. During one of the visits Mr. Carlos Chi informed staff that Mr. Marcos Coc is a fast learner and that he has learnt the names of the trees and the use of the diametric tape. Mr. Pablo Makin was also taking up the role of record keeping; Mr. Chi was very impressed with these two guys. Within the 8 days, they completed 25 sampling plots in Conejo. Mr. Chi and Mr. Coy in their assessment of the four participants from

Conejo said that the group were very hard workers and that they learnt the methodology very quickly.

### **Forest inventory completed in Santa Teresa**

The inventory began on June 19, 2008 and ended on June 27, 2008 totaling 9 days with completion of 36 sampling plots. The Baquianos and the two persons from Conejo camped in the forest for 5 nights while the group from Santa Teresa spent an overnight and return home the following day.

### **Management Plans for Conejo and Santa Teresa**

The management plans for the communities of Conejo and Santa Teresa were completed in October 2008. *See attached Plans.* The plans were developed from the data collected during the forest inventory conducted within Conejo and Santa Teresa lands. The plan includes several practices such as silviculture, reduced impact logging, mitigations measures for expected forest harvesting, etc that both communities would need to undertake to ensure natural regeneration of the forest. SATIIM's staff as well as members of the THFI was provided with the copies of the plan to review and edit. Another effort to improve the management plan and ensure that they are inline with the framework that Forest Department (FD) has developed, a review of the plans was done along with Mr. Darrel Novelo Forest Officer, from Manchaca forest station. His concerns were addressed and he stated that the harvesting would need to follow a code of practice which Food Administration Organization has developed and FD uses. He further stated that FD has a monitoring and evaluation framework that would be used to ensure that the conditions under the license are being adhered to.

At the conclusion of the review, Mr. Novelo said that the next steps would be applying for a license which the groups are currently working on. Currently, both Community Based Forest Enterprises, CBFE (Santa Teresa and Conejo) have prepared and signed the forms for applying to the Belize Forest Department, further approval.

In regards to the EIA related to the Sustainable Forest Management Plan, the Chief Environmental Officer mentioned that activities that influence at least 500 ha yearly require an EIA; however, after detailed description of the Sustainable Forest Management Plans it was verbally agreed that the SFMP was sufficient for mitigating any impact on the forest. In meetings with the Chief Forest Officer and forest officers it was also discussed the importance the SFMP has in addressing any possible negative effects on the forest. In addition, since the environmental law requires at least 500 ha for an EIA and since the annual harvesting blocks for both SFMP are less than 50 ha, the EIA is probably not required under law and since the SFMP already includes chapters on "Impact and Mitigation Measures" that could replace a formal EIA.

## **Socialization of the plans**

It is important for the communities to know and understand what the management plans entails and what the potential of the forest is. This has been long awaited by the communities since the completion of the forest inventory. On September 25<sup>th</sup>, the communities of Conejo and Santa Teresa were presented with the plans. Presentations were conducted by Mr. Itch in Q'eqchi for both communities along with technical support from Mr. Mauro Salazar and Mr. Carlos Gomez. Majority of the participants of both groups were present and were very interactive during the discussions that follow. One very important issue that was presented to both communities during the discussion was the need to respect the boundaries of the management area, to conduct routine monitoring to ensure no illegal logging, to stop the establishment of Milpa within the area and to allow for natural regeneration of the forest. Both communities stated that they recognize the importance for respecting the management area and that continuous illegal logging in the area will cause the project to fail.

In addition to the communities, the first draft of the management plans were also presented to the Forest Department. See attached letter stamped by the Forest Department acknowledging receipt of the plans.

## ***Community Trainings***

Capacity building for both community groups of Conejo and Santa Teresa has been ongoing during the course of the year. Several training workshop were conducted jointly with members of the Belize Cooperatives Department, Vinicio Linares and SATIIM. Thus far, administrative and technical trainings conducted include:

- Leadership skills
- Roles and responsibilities of committee members and general membership
- Cooperative movement in Belize
- Book Keeping and Basic Accounting
- Pricing / Cost of production
- Importance of Policy and Policy Development
- Formulation of By-laws
- Benefits of community based sustainable forest management



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