Report for the European Commission on the project entitled “The development of Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary and Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary as centres for co-management of protected areas.”

1.0 Title Page:

Project title: “The development of Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary and Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary as centres for co-management of protected areas.”

Project number: B7-6201/99-10/ENV/DEV

Region/Country: ACP Region/Belize


Name of Beneficiary: CBWS and CTWS buffer communities

Prepared by: Osmany Salas, Executive Director and Valdemar Andrade, Project Coordinator, Belize Audubon Society

Date: September 2001

2.0 Table of Abbreviations

BAS Belize Audubon Society
BELTRAIDE Belize Trade and Investment Development Service
BEST Belize Enterprise for Sustainable Technology
CBWS Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary
CTWS Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary
DFC Development Finance Corporation
IICA Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
LAC Local Advisory Committee
NAS National Audubon Society
NLAC National Land Advisory Committee
PACT Protected Areas Conservation Trust
PATEC Protected Areas Technical Evaluation Committee
RAC Regional Advisory Committee
TNC The Nature Conservancy
UNDP United Nations Development Programme
WCS Wildlife Conservation Society
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4.0 Project Summary:

BELIZE-EUROPEAN UNION COOPERATION PROJECT SHEET

1. PROJECT SUMMARY SHEET

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as resource managers and trainers in order to increase the human resource capacity to implement the National Biodiversity Strategy.  
4. BAS’ capacity to provide technical assistance to communities, effectively manage other protected areas and contribute to the implementation of the National Biodiversity Strategy is increased.  
5. BAS and other national educational institutions’ strengthen their capacity to provide natural resource management training to communities.  
6. Stakeholders increase awareness of ecosystems’ value and adopt values and attitudes that promote sustainable development.

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<td>1. Creation and implementation of comprehensive long-term co-management plans for CBWS and CTWS</td>
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**B. Project implementation**

| 1. Financial situation Commitment: amount and date |
| Disbursement: amount and date |
| 80% of project budget = Euro 1,302,690. Dec. 29, 1999 |
| 80% of the budget estimate for the first year = Euro 347,384,00; March 17,2000 |

| 2. Progress of implementation Summarized status of activities: |
| In first 12 months of activities. Not on schedule due to: |
3. Intermediary/expected results
   Describe stage of achievement:
   - Co-Management Plan Consultations ongoing
   - Market Feasibility study should commence shortly
   - Equipment Acquisition and initial Training underway
   - Commence Demonstration Project (Cashew processing underway and Honey production getting started.
   - Initial Consultations have been 80% conducted
   - Market feasibility has been initiated through the department of agriculture with respect to cashew products

4. Status of M&E Arrangement
   Reports:
   Audit:
   Evaluation:
   One page project sheet submitted at 6 months period
   First Intermediate Report due March 2001
   Due March 2001
   N.A.

5. Issues and Problems encountered
   - Lack of organization and unity of Communities
   - Natural Disaster (Hurricane Keith)
   - Staff challenges

6. Proposed/Agreed Action to be undertaken
   - Train Park Community Officers as Leaders in Development
   - In process of organizing a Local Advisory Committee in each buffer zone community
   - Commence 2 to 3 more economic generation projects (Aquaculture, Honey Production, and Crafts)

5.0 Summary (of current report):

The fundamental challenge that threatens the long term biological diversity and ecological integrity of Belize’s ecosystems is the lack of people’s involvement in the sustainable development of the country’s natural resources. This deficiency in people’s participation is caused by unemployment, misconception about the importance of ecosystems’ function, feelings of isolation, and lack of stewardship.

This year the Village Council Act, No. 30 of 1999 became even more relevant as villagers and village council members were trained about the details of the Act. This act allows for greater local autonomy and control of the village and their surrounding resources. Belize also experienced its second major hurricane in two years. The aftermath
of Hurricane Keith proved to have some devastating effects especially on the Belize River Valley villages, which include the buffer zone communities of the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary. This natural disaster alone has set the project back approximately six months, but has increased the importance of one of its major components, that of the economic generation projects.

During the first year, much time and energy was spent in disseminating information to the project beneficiaries, on the project itself. Although the Belize Audubon Society had worked with many of the communities before there was still some trust that had to be built before the work to put in place the mechanism to incorporate the communities’ input could be established. After preliminary consultation with the target communities, the formation of Local Advisory Committees (LAC) was deemed the best mechanism to involve the communities. The Local Advisory Committees would be comprised of a group of stakeholders from each village that buffers the two pilot sites of the Cockscomb Basin and Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuaries. After being established at the local level these LACs would then elect an officer to a Regional Advisory Committee (RAC), one for CTWS and one for CBWS. This would be the group of stakeholders that BAS would be working with directly. The RAC would have representation on the project Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The process to commence the formation of these committees has been as follows:

a. The first step in this process was to physically introduce the leaders and key community members to the potential of the Cockscomb Basin and Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuaries. This was initially accomplished by sending packages of information to each village council. The information in the pack included information on the Belize Audubon Society (BAS), information on the protected area, and information on the project itself. Both the full project’s proposal and a condensed version were included in the package.

b. Meetings were held with the Village Councils of the buffer zone communities, Alcaldes (the Mayan Village Elders) and any one who wanted to attend. The purpose of the meeting was to inform them as to what extent the project had been funded and what all was encapsulated in this project. Included in the discussions were the commitments necessary from the communities, in order to take full advantage of the project funds and opportunities. In some instances BAS took the opportunity to present the information at forums that were planned for community leaders.

c. Following the meetings BAS and the communities jointly planned field visits for each community to have an initial opportunity to visit the protected areas to observe and internalize the potential that each area presents. This was accomplished by presenting the protected areas in a context that highlighted how other communities were taking advantage of these opportunities (See Annex A for photographs of the field visits). It was amazing to observe the community members hiking through areas of the parks where they had never been to before. For some community members in the case of the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary visit, it could be observed that it was the first time that they were in a
boat. A part of orientation of the community members was accomplished by teaming up with LightHawk (the “Conservation Airwing”), an NGO that conducts over-flights of the protected areas. This year two of those over-flights were organized for the buffer zone communities surrounding the Cockscomb Basin and the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuaries. This was especially of interest for the village councils since they are in the middle of surveying their boundaries, which has implications for the first village council elections under the new Village Council Act. The community members also got the opportunity to physically see the kind of opportunities that exist from being so close to a protected area. The Protected Areas Directors/Project field coordinators are currently working with the communities to finalize the establishment of the Local Advisory Committees. This process should be completed by the end of March.

One of the main constraints has been the lack of organization of the communities. Of course, this was somewhat expected since in the report entitled “Consultancy Report on strategies for the co-management of the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary with local communities,” it was identified that in many of the buffer zone communities of the Cockscomb Basin a leader could not be clearly identified. This has also proven to be a constraint for developing the alternative income generation projects. One of the strategies utilized by BAS has been to organize all the support agencies working on one of the alternative income generation projects, in this case, the cashew industry. BAS then, has taken the following approach:

a. First, BAS approached the Ministry of Agriculture in order to be included into the Fruits and Root Crops Committee. The following agencies committed to support the common approach along with BAS: the Belize Trade and Investment Development Service, BELTRAIDE, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, IICA, the Cooperatives Department and the Taiwanese Technical Mission. (See Appendix B for a brief description of the before mentioned agencies). This was with the objective of seeking to get the two largest communities that produce cashews to work together. It has been recognized that local producers and processors compete among themselves. This has then put them at a disadvantage with Guatemalan exports into Belize. (Also, shared was the fact that the communities would from time to time switch partners depending on whether that partner could easily be persuaded to do exactly what the communities wanted. Hence, they would play one organization against the other.)

b. Several planning meetings were held at this level to elaborate what would be the proposal to the communities.

c. Next, meetings were held with the communities to get their agreement on which direction they wanted to take the industry. This resulted in the communities involved in the cashew industry agreeing into becoming incorporated into a Belize Cashew Cooperative. This would entail establishing one cashew-processing factory that would serve all the communities involved in the industry.
d. The next step is for the communities to form themselves into this cooperative under the guidance of the Cooperatives Department.

e. Following this will be a site visit to a similar processing plant that could serve as a model. This is where some of the regional context could help since there is a cashew processing plant that is fully established and operated by a cooperative in El Salvador. The community members who visit will get the opportunity to experience a range of activities including structure and administrative management of cooperatives, plant layout and operation, and orchard management and maintenance.

f. The process leading to the establishment of two other income generation activities have commenced, namely honey production and crafts production in two of the buffer zone communities surrounding the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary.

6.0 General Context:

The fundamental problem that threatens the long term biological diversity and ecological integrity of Belize’s ecosystems is the lack of people’s contribution to the sustainable development of the country’s natural resources. This deficiency in people’s participation is caused by unemployment, misconception about the importance of ecosystems’ function and feelings of isolation and lack of stewardship.

The local context can best be summed in the following two paragraphs excerpted from the “Consultancy Report on strategies for the co-management of the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary (CBWS) with local communities” carried out by Pablo Isla Villar where he reported the following findings: (See Appendix C for complete “Consultancy Report on strategies for the co-management of the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary with local communities”) report:

“- Economic opportunities do exist for the local communities
Commercial plantations such as banana and citrus are surrounding the communities around CBWS. If community members do get some income from these plantations, few of them want to be regular workers. There are obvious reasons for this attitude. Nevertheless, it is clear that other economic activities could be set up as product or service providers for the plantation structures or for the plantation workers. Also, market for fair trade of crop products do exist in the area as demonstrated by cacao production of Maya Mopan community. Actually, there are important problems of training for business planning, setting-up, management and internal evaluation of grassroots initiatives.
Neither the lack of capital nor the lack of training can explain alone the poor interest communities give to those opportunities. An assistance oriented attitude and a lack of social cohesion could explain the absence or failure of communities’ involvement.

- Local communities have a low average of local power
Communities have settled relatively recently. Therefore, the elderly do not have much incidence on the communities’ leadership. The chairmen and Community [Village] Councils appear more like requirements of the government to maintain a valid interlocutor rather than a real leadership that has emerged at [a] grassroot [level]. In fact, those leaderships have little to very little moral authority for the community governance.”

This year the Village Council Act, 1999 No. 30 of 1999 (See Appendix D For Copy of the Village Council Act) became more relevant as the village councils and community members were trained about this Act. The Act legally came into effect in January of 2000 but it has taken some time in actually utilizing the extent of the Act. This Act itself provides for the establishment, constitution, operation and authority of village councils. The Act gives the village councils a tremendous amount of power and autonomy along with enormous responsibilities. One major component of the Act is the provision for village councils to have a say in the management of the natural resources, specifically for the regulation of parks, gardens and public recreation grounds in the village. The village can also and most importantly make by-laws that will govern the village properly and the facilities that are located within their boundaries. This list includes houses, yards and latrines etc. This kind of power can be utilized in three ways:

a. it can be utilized properly (meaning that the leaders could get proper training in interpreting the importance and power of the Village Council Act and work with NGO’s and governmental agencies in developing their villages),

b. it cannot be utilized (meaning that villages could remain totally clueless about the importance and power of the Act and hence underutilize the Act),

c. and it can be utilized improperly (meaning that the village leader could be led to misinterpret the Act and undermined the development of their villages).

With the new Act in place the village councils are preparing for the first election of village councils under this act, which will be held in April. Once again this has slowed the process since the candidates are busy campaigning. The political scene in Belize is very intense. This is fueled by an intense rivalry within a two party system. Most of the leaders within the community are presently working on campaigns or either vying for positions on the next village council. This group of people would also generally include the people who are heading or have the potential to capitalize on and benefit from the alternative income generation programs that are being targeted in this project.

The economic demonstration projects that were originally proposed have now become increasingly important, as in September/October of 2000 Belize experienced some major effects from the aftermath of Hurricane Keith. Hurricane Keith brought high flooding conditions upon the Belize River Valley area and the north of Belize. The Belize River Valley area that includes the buffer zone villages of the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary suffered in the aftermath of the storm. The Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary is a wetland area. Its main function is to act like a sink or a sponge during major storms. Without the
lagoons of this area the fast flowing waters would inundate Belize City. The lagoons help to collect the water and slowly release them, making this area prone to flooding. Needless to say, the Belizean rural communities found themselves cut off from the rest of Belize. Houses on stilts appeared to be ground floor houses. Some ground floor houses were partially or fully submerged. The ground floors of several tourism lodges had water flowing through their windows.

The majority of the relief work was done by boat and, where possible, some was done by vehicle. The scenery was filled with stranded cattle and poultry, and flooded villages and submerged homes. It was just astounding pulling up to people’s doors in a boat from which we took food supplies and medicines. Many children in the area had cold, fever, infection and other minor illnesses so the doctor had to treat them one by one. In areas like May Pen the team had to visit each house individually since the whole area was inundated. In other villages temporary clinics were setup outside the schools or in someone’s back yard. The limited supplies that were initially distributed were more than welcomed.

As the time went on, Crooked Tree Village became the center of the distribution for the villages that the Belize Audubon Society was supplying. These villages included May Pen, Leona, Rancho Dolores, Crooked Tree, Flowers Bank, Isabella Bank, Gardenia, and Biscayne (See Appendix E for Protected Areas Maps including Buffer Zone Villages indicated.) The Crooked Tree Village Council along with BAS staff organized volunteers to distribute rations, bag rations for the other villages and to load and unload the supplies. This group was known as the Belize Rural Food and Medical Distribution Unit. With funding from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Belize Audubon staff along with the Crooked Tree Village Council sustained this for three months and completed the bulk of the relief work by the end of December 2000. By the end of the effects of the aftermath, the soils of many farmers’ lands were fully waterlogged. A majority of the crops and livestock were lost. To add to this the tourism season also got off to a very slow start, as the waters did no recede until early February 2001. This then, has increased the justification and need for the economic demonstration programs to be commenced and established as soon as possible and especially for the communities buffering the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary.

7.0 Enumeration of the Project Objectives:

Although the project covers two pilot sites, Cockscomb Basin and Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary, the purpose is singular: establish co-management and capacity systems with communities using socioeconomic incentives with a view to contribute to biological diversity and ecological integrity. Biodiversity and ecological integrity also encompass the social dimension because human resources are an essential constituent of a healthy environment and its effective management. This will be accomplished by involving relevant stakeholders in ecosystems’ management to promote biological diversity and ecological integrity through sustainable development activities.
8.0 Implementation / Activities / Results

Preamble:

As a part of the process of setting up the co-management structure the Belize Audubon Society established a Belize Audubon Society Co-Management Project Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). This committee is constituted of the following members:

John Pinelo, Protected Areas Officer, Forest Department
Beverly Ann Wade, Fisheries Administrator
Sergio Garcia, Chief Agricultural Officer
Mr. Elvis Requena, Ministry of Economic Development
Vincent Gillett, Coastal Zone Management Authority
Marcel van Opstal, Chargé de Affaires, European Union
Lisel Alamilla, BAS Director and PACT Co-Management Project Coordinator
Anselmo Castaneda, National Liaison Officer, Mesoamerican Biological Corridor Project Representative, Cockscomb Basin communities
Representative, Crooked Tree communities
Laetitia Solis, Coordinator, Northern Belize Biological Corridor Project (PFB)
Osmany Salas, BAS Executive Director
Valdemar Andrade, Project Coordinator (Secretary)

The terms of reference for this committee are as follows:

1. Review all project reports.
2. Ensure that materials produced for the project promote the objectives of the project.
3. Ensure that the communities in the project area achieve maximum benefit from the project.
4. Assist in promoting the project objectives with policy makers and other stakeholders.
5. Keep the project coordinator abreast of information that may impact the project.
6. Give guidance to the project Coordinator.
7. Meet on a quarterly basis.

This committee will be the main advisory committee for the project. It will act as a forum where questions can be possibly answered and where educated recommendations can be made. With similar projects being implemented through the Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT) and the Northern Biological Corridors Project being implemented through Programme for Belize, there are many lessons that can be shared and mistakes that can be documented so each project that follows does not have to commit the same mistakes.

(See Appendix F for the Minutes of the First TAC meeting)
8.1 Co-management structure:

The first step to the consultation process was to conceptualize a model for including as many stakeholders as possible to have an input into establishing a co-management structure for the proper management of the two pilot protected areas. This was accomplished by reviewing several options, which ranged from working with just the village councils to establishing independent local advisory committees. After initial consultations and feedback a majority of the communities agreed that the best solution would be to establish an independent Local Advisory Committee (LAC) for each village. From these LAC’s the villages would elect a Regional Advisory Committee (RAC). These RAC’s would be made up of the elected members one or two from each village. The Regional Advisory Committee would then elect two members unto the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The main challenge expressed in utilizing this methodology was that there had to be a mechanism to make sure that the RAC’s feed the information to the LAC’s, and that LAC’s feed the information to the communities. One solution was to have random meetings with the committees and communities to ensure that they are receiving the information. (See Appendix G for diagram of proposed model and proposed Terms of Reference for the LAC’s and RAC’s.)

Initial consultations to date have occurred in all the primary villages. These include the buffer zone villages of Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary (CBWS) as follows: Maya Center, San Roman, Santa Rosa, San Pablo, Red Bank, and the buffer zone villages of the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary (CTWS) as follows: Gardenia, Biscayne, May Pen, Lemonal, and Crooked Tree (See Appendix E for Protected Areas Map including buffer zone communities indicated). The focus of the initial consultation meetings was to share what exactly was funded in the project, to answer questions regarding the project and to commence the process of establishing the local advisory committees. Both transportation and food were covered for these meeting. Basically a stipend was allotted per community member that was invited and the communities themselves prepared the food for the meetings. An initial meeting with the entire village councils was conducted and a community meeting should have followed. All the village council meetings took place, but many of the community meetings have still not occurred for various reasons including:

a. lack of organization on the community’s part: This lack of organization from limited observation comes from lack of training. In many cases the village councils simply do not have the capacity. It also arises from the lack of systems and procedures for the village councils to report back to their communities. Much of it also stems from the political friction among the half of the community that is of one party and the other half, which is of the other party.

b. lack of proper staffing on BAS’ part: At the inception of the project BAS felt that the Park Directors could also be made the Community Liaison Officers. This was tried. In CBWS this could not be adequately tested as the director had to be dismissed. One Ranger was also being trained to act as a
Community Liaison Officer and her services too had to be terminated for contravening CBWS staff procedures. The CTWS director is still enrolled in a leadership-training program. This model has to be adequately reviewed by the Project Technical Advisory Committee for recommendations.

c. and, the aftermath of Hurricane Keith: During the aftermath of Hurricane Keith the communities of the Belize River Valley that were most affected were busily scrambling to survive and save what they had left. Hence, there was not much time for anything else.

One outcome of the consultations was that every community, without exception, agreed that the local advisory groups should be separate from the village councils for political reasons. The village council members also recommended that the LAC should be made up of between seven to ten members so that the groups would be administratively manageable. At the end of each meeting it was agreed that the village councils would call a meeting with the entire village and get the process for the establishment of the local advisory committees started. At these initial meetings it was abundantly clear that many of the village leaders themselves had not really visited the protected areas.

The next step was to organize field visits for each of the villages. Fourteen people from each buffer zone village were invited to visit the two sites. Again, both transportation and food were covered for these visits. Once again the communities prepared the meals for their visit. All the buffer villages of the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary (CTWS) including Gardenia, Biscayne, May Pen, Lomonal, and Crooked Tree have visited the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary. At CBWS Santa Rosa and San Roman have visited as an entire community. All the other villages have visited as individual leaders or as officers of the village councils. *(See Appendix H for photographs from over-flights.)*

A part of orientation process was accomplished by teaming up with Light Hawk (the Conservation Airwing”), an NGO that donates time for over-flights of the protected areas. This year two of those over-flights were organized for the buffer zone communities of Cockscomb and Crooked Tree. This was especially of interest for the village councils since they are currently engaged in surveying to establish their boundaries. The community members were also able to physically see how close their villages are to the protected area. They were also able to conceptualize what kind of opportunities there are from being so close to a protected area, that is, being gateways to the protected areas and taking advantage of the tourism opportunities. The village council and community members, who participated in the over-flights, received an opportunity to fly over both the protected areas and their villages.

In preparation for some of these consultations there has been the piloting of Communication Skills Program in partnership with the National Communication Skills Program of the Ministry of Education. This is a national literacy program aimed to teach basic language and writing skills to community members across the nation. This training was also conducted as a recommendation from the PROLEAD project entitled “Indigenous Women in Local Governance Leadership that was funded by the Inter-American Development Bank. The main goal of that project was to develop the
leadership skills of women in communities bordering protected areas as an important step towards empowering them to participate actively in decision-making processes that affect their lives. The objective of the communication skills program was to prepare some community members of Maya Center and Maya Mopan buffer zone villages of CBWS to better participate in the consultations as they take place within their communities. The results of this pilot project have not been as expected. In Maya Center the attendance has been better than in Maya Mopan where the numbers have dwindled but in both cases the numbers were high in the beginning and then tapered off.

Presently there is no official established management-planning framework sanctioned by the Forest Department. The Forest Department is the government agency that accepts and recommends management plans to the Minister of Natural Resources for signing. This then leaves the Belize Audubon Society (BAS) without guidelines to follow for establishing management plans for the areas that are managed by BAS. This along with the lack of formation of the Local Advisory Committees (LAC) has contributed to fact that process for developing the management plans has not been commenced. However, the BAS Protected Areas Coordinators (See Appendix I for Organizational Structure) have participated in an initiative to draft a new “Co-Management” framework for management planning that will be sanctioned by the Forest Department of the Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Industry through the Protected Areas Technical Evaluation Committee (PATEC). This framework’s main area of focus will be to incorporate communities into the management-planning framework. A part of the new strategy is managing outside the boundaries of protected areas. This whole process started when the PACT Co-management Project, project manager was introduced to the Five-S Framework that was being produced by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) as a possible methodology for site management planning.

Subsequently, the Nature Conservancy held a training session in Punta Gorda on the Five-S Framework. This workshop was for the English Speaking Caribbean Agencies that TNC works with. The BAS Protected Areas Coordinators were also invited to this session. At this session the participants recommended that the community involvement component needed much strengthening. The biodiversity component was strong and straightforward and was based on focusing on the systems and looking on how to mitigate the stresses on the systems. The weakness was that from an ecosystem. The systems point of view is that the communities are deemed a source of stress, since in many cases they hunt, fish, and use the natural resources in and around their communities.

Another session was held where all the agencies involved in protected areas management were invited to a familiarization session of the Five-S Framework as a possible jumping off point of a framework for the Belize Protected Areas System. BAS was tasked with introducing the F-S Framework to the Forest Department. Jose Courrau, Protected Areas Specialist from the Latin America and Caribbean Division of the Nature Conservancy was invited to present the Five-S Model. Once again the observation from the group was the weakness of the community involvement component.
Another session was then held with Roger Wilson, Protected Areas Specialist, to look at the valid components of the Five-S model, since he was utilizing it to create a management plan for the Rio Bravo Conservation Area, Belize’s largest private protected area. A two-day session was held with Mr. Wilson. The invited technical people included the staff of the Forest Department, the Protected Areas Coordinators of the Belize Audubon Society, Consultants in the field, and the project coordinator of the Pact Co-Management Project. A final report was produced. Once again the technical people that were involved felt that the document still did not adequately cover the community involvement component. *(See Appendix J for Proceedings of the Roger Wilson Session)*

The Project manager of the PACT Co-management project planned one final workshop with Dr. William J McLaughlin from the College of Natural Resources of the University of Idaho whose specialty is community participation in natural resource management. Invited to this session were the community members from the buffer zone communities of the Five Blues Lake National Park, Aquacaliente National Park, Gales Point, and Freshwater Creek Forest Reserve, the Protected Areas Coordinators of BAS, the Park Directors of CBWS and CTWS, consultants in the field, Programme for Belize, and the Forest Department. The main goal of this two-day session was to build a practical management planning approach for Belize’s protected areas system. This draft approach was built in a participatory forum where communities of the PACT Co-management Project participated in order to get a community perspective in the management of a protected area. The main focus of this two-day session was come up with a methodology that would allow for the communities to participate throughout the management of the protected area. At the end of the session this was encapsulated in what was termed Conservation Mobilization which is a concept that includes aspects such as environmental education, public involvement, advocacy, community/NGO/CBO capacity building, and partnerships and strategic alliances as part of an on going social mobilization process that needs to be involved in every step of the protected area management planning framework. Hence this component would run parallel to the entire management planning process and the different aspects such as environmental education, advocacy, and capacity building are used as necessary at each step, again looking at management beyond the boundaries of the protected area. *(See Annex K for Proceedings of the workshop)*

**8.2 Economic demonstration projects:**

The first step in establishing the economic demonstration projects was to conduct a follow-up consultation with the communities in order to reconfirm the proposed projects that they had initially proposed in the consultation sessions prior to the submission of the project proposal. In majority of the cases the recommendations remained the same.

The next step that BAS took was to liaise with the Ministry of Agriculture to acquire initial feedback as to the feasibility and markets for any of the proposed projects. The Ministry of Agriculture had also committed to working with BAS and the buffer zone communities prior to the submission of the project proposal. The Ministry of Agriculture
was able to present a plan, which included three of the main alternative income
generation projects that the BAS/EU Co-Management Project proposed to target. These
included the cashew nut industry, fish farming, and honey production. In the course of
the meetings with the Agriculture Department BAS was introduced to the other agencies
working on these particular economic generation programs.

The goal then became to get all the agencies that were working on these products to come
together. The Belize Audubon Society (BAS) then requested to become a part of the
Food and Root Crops Committee on which all the relevant organization are represented
and where these various industries are discussed. The project that seemed the most
viable in terms of bringing all the players together was a cashew industry for Belize. The
Ministry of Agriculture, BELTRAIDE, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on
Agriculture, IICA, the Cooperatives Department, and the Taiwanese Technical Aid
Mission all committed their assistance after some lobbying by BAS, which is able to use
the funding as leverage to try to develop the cashew industry as a community initiative.
*(See Appendix B for a short description of the agencies involved in the cashew
industry)*

Since both the Ministry of Agriculture and IICA had already investigated the general
market studies a subsequent step was to hold a meeting to share experiences with and
about the cashew industry and with working with the communities. This group of
agencies also wanted to establish a proposal to the two main communities involved in
cashew harvesting and processing. The results of this sharing session were as follows:

a.) The first positive indication of a viable industry was that there
is an obvious local market that is not being aggressively
fulfilled. There is a local market of approximately one million
pounds (1,000,000 lbs) per year.

b.) There is large importation of cashew nuts into Belize from
Guatemala to satisfy the local market. The Guatemalan price is
half that of the price set in Belize.

c.) External markets also exist that are relatively stable and offer a
good price of about two dollars and twenty cents US dollars
(US $2.20) per pound.

d.) Some realities that came to light was that it was just as obvious
that there is no way that cashew growers were not harvesting
all the cashews being grown, estimated at one million pounds
per year.

e.) The other noteworthy point was that the cashew plantations are
not being managed. This means that cashews are not being
planted in rows, they are not being pruned to maximize growth,
and fertilizers are not being added to maximize production and
quality of the product.

f.) An important point was that there are large developers that
want to develop the industry.

g.) Lastly and most importantly was that all the growers and
processors have to be consolidated into one Belize National
Cashew Cooperative in order to be able to produce the volumes that would make it feasible to establish a factory in Belize.

Several planning meetings were held at this level which were followed by meetings held with the communities of Burrell Boom and Crooked Tree to get their agreement on which direction they wanted to take with the industry. To date, the communities involved in the cashew industry have agreed that they want to become one Cashew Cooperative and are prepared to establish one regional cashew processing plant that would serve all the communities. The proposed location for this facility is Sand Hill Village, a community that lies geographically in between the two major cashew-producing villages of Burrell Boom and Crooked Tree. These two villages are now in the process of forming themselves into one regional cooperative. This process will be combined with a site visit to a similar plant that is established in El Salvador. This site visit is critical for the community members since they will receive an opportunity to see an operation including a facility similar to what they are proposing. At the Salvadoran plant they will be able to ask both management and technical questions. They will also be able to ask questions about the orchard management and most importantly about the cooperative. Some questions that have been posed include constitution, payment schedules and ownership of the industry.

In the meantime a proposal has been drafted which will be presented to the Government of Belize for the additional funding support needed to acquire the land and materials to construct the building that would house that actual processing plant. Included in the proposal is a recommendation for loans for this sector by the government through the Development Finance Corporation (DFC). The Belize Audubon Society (BAS) is also in negotiations with the Belize Enterprise for Sustainable Technology (BEST) for loans to this industry. All the afore-mentioned organizations are contributing in-kind or direct funding. BAS/EU is contributing to the machinery and equipment for the factory, Business and Technical training funds, a part of the funds to travel to El Salvador, market studies and systematization of manuals and proceedings from the various workshops. BELTRAIDE is assisting with the market studies and formulation of the process into a proposal to the government. IICA is contributing with the technical training (orchard management, fertilization, pruning, etc) technology for machinery, facilitation of the visit to El Salvador, and general technical assistance in formulation of the final proposal to the Government of Belize. The Cooperatives Department is assisting in the organization and setting up of the groups. The Taiwanese Technical Mission is assisting with further processing of the products and packaging (preserves, dried false fruit, wines, etc.) And the Ministry of Agriculture will be assisting with the help of the extension officers who will provide the day to day assistance to the farmers, aid in setting up a cashew nursery, and help to present the entire project proposal to the Government of Belize. (See Annex L for cost estimates of the entire processing plant including management training.)

The process leading to the establishment of two other income generation activities has commenced, that is, honey production and crafts in two of the buffer zone communities surrounding the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary. These two economic generation projects are slated for Maya Mopan and Maya Center respectively. Maya Mopan has
some honey production activities already ongoing, but group(s) is (are) in much need of organization and technical assistance. Being the gateway to the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary, Maya Center has developed a well-established craft shop. There are issues of pricing, diversification of crafts, and presentation. The vision for this center is that it would become the regional craft center for all the villages (CBWS buffer zone villages) interested in producing and selling crafts. The National Audubon Society and Wildlife Conservation Society are assisting BAS in preparing a development plan for CBWS that is consistent with this vision. One serious consideration is designing the gateway so that people have to go through the craft shop. Other consideration so far has been signage and the need for a building with better lighting and presentation. *(See Annex M for minutes of the BAS/NAS/WCS CBWS workshop)*

8.3 Staff Training:

Two staff members commenced a one-year leadership training session. This is a program being hosted for community members who are beneficiaries of the Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT) Co-management project. This is a project that is similar in scope to the BAS/EU Co-Management project in that it aims to engage communities in the management of protected areas. The major difference is that the community groups of this project are organizing themselves with the interest of managing a protected area that is near to them. While in BAS’ case BAS has been managing the areas and is now working to establish a mechanism through which the buffer zone community members can realize maximum benefits from having a park near to them by involving the communities in the actual management of the protected areas to the level that they are prepared to participate. This training was deemed appropriate for staff to attend in order to prepare them for and while they begun to execute the co-management project and also as a way to exchange ideas with other resource managers who are involved in co-management. One staff member that was undergoing the training has since left the Belize Audubon Society while the Director of the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary is still enrolled and attending.

A staff exchange program is being pursued with the Old Woman Creek National Estuarine Reserve. Initially the Park Director, Gene Wright, and their Education Coordinator, Linda Feix, came to visit with the Belize Audubon Society and the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary. Following this visit the Protected Areas Coordinator (Co-Management) returned a visit to Ohio in which a work plan was elaborated for a further development of an exchange program surrounding migratory birds. A visit is planned for May where two of the staff from the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary will be visiting in Huron, Ohio in order to acquire general training in monitoring and enforcement, of which one main area will be water quality monitoring and bird monitoring and census. After this training session, BAS personnel should have a good idea of what equipment will be need for the water-quality monitoring program for the two co-management sites.

8.4 Resource management training:
Resource management training has not been initiated, but the Belize Audubon Society will be consulting and collaborating by the end of this year with Protected Areas Conservation Trust, PACT, and the University of Belize to see how a national program can be developed and established by September 2002. There has also been some communication with St. John’s Junior College, a Jesuit tertiary level institution about creating such a program. An initial meeting was held with all the relevant teachers of the institution and follow-up research is under way to determine the feasibility of such a program. From here a proposal will be put forward to the Administration of the institution.

8.5 Community Training:

The contracts for consultancies to prepare and carry out the Community Training Programs should be signed by the middle of March. The following is the planned sequence for the training community-training program:

a. preparation commences in March,
b. recruitment in April
   c. and implementation commences in May.

Since this training will take place over a seven-month period the rationale behind the recruitment is to get the most interested members of community to participate. The training is as well being offered as a scholarship. This however does not mean that the persons have to be academically inclined, it is rather as means of getting commitment from the individual. The training modules are being prepared in the following major categories: Community Development Planning and Leadership, and Sustainable Livelihoods. These are broken down as follows.

I Community Development Planning and Leadership:

1. **Community Development Planning:** This module will look at the importance of planning, methods for getting the community involved in the planning process, and exposure to a simple community development planning framework that participants will be able to use in their work.

2. **Leadership for Community Participation/Action:** This module will examine different leadership styles and promote an appreciation among participants for a leadership style that enables people living in communities to actively participate in the development process. Participants will become familiar with the skills and qualities of an enabling leadership but will not be able to develop these skills in the course of this training.

3. **Advocacy:** In this module participants will learn how to develop an advocacy campaign. They will have the opportunity to actually put together a campaign of their choice, which if they desire, they could actually conduct.
II Sustainable Livelihoods:

1. **Sustainable Livelihoods:** This module will introduce the definition of Sustainable Livelihood as presented by the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and those other concepts that will be most relevant to the understanding of the information to be presented. This section of the workshop will try to focus on how the concepts can be applied to conditions that exist in Belize. This module will focus on four areas of sustainable livelihood as relevant to the given communities that will be participating. Namely, a.) Agriculture, b.) Forestry, c.) Fishery, and d.) Tourism. The importance of broad participation of the communities in which these industries are located will be emphasized.

2. **Micro-Enterprise Planning and Management:** This module will introduce the participants to the actual process and concepts of planning and implementation of a micro-enterprise. The participants will be introduced to useful definitions of micro and small enterprises in Belize and the informal sector of which most of them are a part. This module will offer an overview of a small Business and Business Management; it will also incorporate the process of assessing the feasibility of business. A section will follow this on preparing a business plan, which will include the operation of the business, marketing and business financing. After preparing the plan the next step will be to teach what are the necessary practices in business, such as pricing and selling the product and record keeping. The last step then is to introduce the actual forms and formats that are utilized in running a business.

8.6 **BAS strengthening:**

The visitors’ centres at Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary and Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary are being upgraded for all community and resource managers to utilize for information, education and assistance. This is also being carried out as a part of the sustainability program for the tourism programs of both protected areas.

8.7 **Education for sustainability (EfS):**

An environmental education consultant has been hired to coordinate and develop an Environmental Conservation Carnival. This one-day education session that will take place at schools across the country. This session will involve the introduction of different environmental education topics. A professional artist from Armenia Village, on of the buffer zone villages of Blue Hole National Park, has been contracted to develop the materials for this programs. Included as a part of this program will be the development of teaching or facilitators guidelines in addition to instructions on how to make stimulating environmental education materials from resources that are readily available around them. Training will be disseminated to teachers in a national workshop.
There will also be a national workshop for Environmental Educators to learn about education for sustainability as an action oriented approach to teaching or transferring knowledge.

The Education for Sustainability Program is on target according to the work plan set out. The Environmental Studies Students of St. John’s Junior College are developing curricula for the Environmental Conservation Carnival. This program will be taught at primary and secondary schools. This is being done as a part of their fulfillment of their course work for their Associate Degree.

The Marketing Director is in the process of finalizing the development of brochures that will provide information on the parks to the communities and visitors in general. Brochures have also been developed as a part of the Land Alliance For National Development Campaign. This is in an effort to lobby the government to introduce a comprehensive land policy. This is a major issue when it comes to sustainability in the buffer zone communities of the national parks land accessibility. For a majority of the proposed economic generation activities land accessibility is an issue. At the Civil Society Summit of 1996 and in the "People's Manifesto...Century 21" of 1998, land was identified as one of five priority concerns. Land concerns centred on land administration, distribution, tenancy and utilization in Belize. Indeed, the Summit and the subsequent Civil Society Assembly heard testimonies from ordinary people about the many woeful experiences associated with their quest to obtain land for building a home or farming. There were concerns raised about the special land rights of indigenous people, maintaining a balance between conservation issues and the needs and rights of people to land, and the politician’s excessive control and manipulation of our land resources. The Belize Audubon Society’s Environmental Charter “Environmental Agenda for the 21st Century” has also identified a number of issues. These issues include: no clearly urban/rural development policy, ribbon development, speculation, unsuitability of land for what it is used, high environmental costs, inappropriate agricultural practices, de-reservation of protected areas, no secure land titles, and a rapidly expanding aquacultural industry.

This initiative got started when three NGO's agreed to join efforts in designing and implementing a National Land Reform Advocacy Campaign beginning in 1999. The three organizations are the Belize Association of Producers Organization (BAPO), Belize Audubon Society (BAS), and Society for the Promotion of Education and Research (SPEAR). To determine the exact nature of the campaign BAPO, BAS and SPEAR co-sponsored a workshop from Thursday, 29th April - Saturday, 1st May 1999 at the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary. Sixteen participants from across the country of Belize, representing each district, participated.

The workshop was convened to help develop the goal, objectives, strategies and activities of the campaign and to get organizations and individuals to become a part of the alliance to carry forward the campaign. The main concerns that were discussed at the workshop are as follows:

a. No land policy
b. Partisan political control
c. Foreign ownership  
d. Uneven land distribution  
e. Lack of monitoring and enforcement of land laws  
f. Lack of security of tenure  
g. Abuse of land acquisition powers of government  
h. Ineffective and corrupt distribution process  
i. Ineffective administrative, information and staff structures  
j. Lack of public awareness about land laws, rights, and issues

The goal of the campaign that the participants of the workshop formulated was:

“To influence the establishment, through legislation, and after full consultation with civil society and the private sector, a comprehensive, national land policy which allows for clear, non-partisan and fair practices for the distribution, management and sustainable use of our land resources...no later than September 2001.”

Since the establishment of LAND the Government of Belize has formed a National Land Advisory Committee (NLAC) to address the drafting of such a policy. The Land Alliance for National Development will be represented in the NLAC so that it can have input in the formulation of a comprehensive Land Policy for the nation of Belize.

8.8 Equipment:

One Ford Ranger Crew Cab four by four vehicle was purchased to facilitate the project (See Annex N for pictures of the vehicle). The main purpose for the vehicle is for logistical support to reach the communities in order to hold meeting and to get information to them. With transportation available for the Director at Cockscomb and for the Project Coordinator in the central office we have been able to mobilize the communities especially the villages that are located far from the headquarters of the protected areas but close to the southern boundaries of the protected areas. A small patrol boat was also purchased for Crooked Tree, which helped both the hurricane relief effort when everything was only accessible by boat and in the upcoming dry weather when this shallow draft boat will be able to be utilized for patrols and monitoring. A digital camera with accessories has also been purchased. A Nikon 880 Coolpix, a high-end digital camera was purchased for both monitoring and patrol purposes and also as a means of systematizing the project.

9.0 Results against the project purpose stated in the logical framework:

It is too early to measure the results so far against the project purpose stated in the logical framework. The set back due to a late start and aftermath of Hurricane Keith in this instance are significant and hence time is required to get the project to where it should be. The five CTWS buffer zone communities were physically inundated up to mid January.
This also affected CBWS communities in that much of the time of the central office was diverted to the Belize River Valley Hurricane relief effort. To compound the matter at the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary, there have been some staff changes that have affected the co-management project. The Park Director/Community Liaison was dismissed in early January. It has taken some time for the new staff to become familiarized with the project. In toto it is estimated that a minimum of six months have been lost due to Hurricane Keith and the administrative issues.

10.0 Conclusion / recommendations / lessons learned:

At this point, the main lessons learned are that the communities need a significant amount of capacity building and organization in order for them to be able to participate more actively. The Community Training Program will assist in facilitating the communities to participate more. This will come mainly from receiving benefits from knowledge acquired, the trust that will be built in the process of consultations and progress that will be made with the economic demonstration projects.

From participating in the PACT co-management project both at the Project Steering Committee level and in the training sessions being conducted under this project, it can be seen how a carefully tailored training program by consultants, who understand the context and the need, can make a difference in the participation and commitment level of members of any given community buffering any protected area. Also with the shift in the power dynamics of the villages via the Village Council Act the community members can play an important role in the how the communities participate. This Act allows for greater autonomy and control of the village and their surrounding resources.

The TAC is recommending a twenty-four (24) month extension to the project. The justification for this lies not only in the fact that for six month during the first year of the project, implementation was next to nil due the aftermath of hurricane Keith. The main constraint however, is the lack of readiness of a majority of the communities to participate in the management of the protected areas or to implement economic generation projects. This is due to the communities’ lack of organization and capacity at this point in time. From being out in the field and from the experience of the PACT Co-Management Project and the Northern Biological Corridors Project it is estimated that it will take the communities two and half to three years to get to a state of readiness. This process involves training the communities in relevant leadership and development skills and business training and micro-enterprise development. It would also involve setting up the Local and Regional Advisory Committees and the structures. A major component would be to establish relevant information feedback mechanisms that ensure that information is flowing at all levels.

It would take an additional estimated two and a half years to properly implement the economic generation projects and other components of monitoring and patrols, which is part of the management of protected areas that can only be accomplished with community involvement and stewardship. This would involve consolidating the agencies working on the target economic generation projects. It would also involve acquiring the
additional funding and equipment and establishing the project. Of course this means executing both feasibility and market studies and then a business plan. Finally, it would also involve training and regular evaluation and mitigation.

11.0 Annexes