

LIBERIAN FORESTRY BRIEF



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Status of the awarding and start-up of timber contracts

The Three FMCs

The financiers of two of the three FMC holders recently severed ties, with Taakor walking away from EJ&J (FMC B in River Cess) and Logs & Lumber dissolving its contract with LTTC (FMC C in River Cess). But since then, Euro Logging has teamed up with EJ&J and LTTC claims it has procured a loan from the Nigerian-based Oceanic Bank.

The pre-harvest enu-

meration continues in all three concessions, with Alpha having completed 12 blocks, LTTC having completed 10 blocks, and EJ&J having completed one block, but working in six.

The Four FMCs

The Bid Evaluation Panel recently wrapped up its study of the bidding companies,

The due diligence report recently came out. A few civil society organizations have expressed concern that the

report was not thorough enough and that major questions remain as to the financial qualifications of the companies.

The TSCs

Tarpeh Timber Company remains furthest along in exporting. It has moved logs from the concession in Grand Bassa to containers at the Port of Buchanan. But it still must pay of fees and a fine for having illegally felled before it is issued an export license.

LiberFor CoC project secures \$ 500,000 support from GoL

The Government of Liberia has earmarked half a million US dollars in the national budget for the new fiscal year in favor of the Chain Custody Contract, successfully prolonging USAID's support of \$1.6 million to the forest sector's flagship project for forest governance and potentially attracting more funding from international donors.

The Chain-of-Custody Contract currently outsourced to the Swiss verification company Société Générale de Surveillance (SGS) is designed to ensure that all wood products issued from Forest Contract Areas are tracked back to their origin in the forest and that all related payments are accounted for. The forest sector's potential under the economic revitalization pillar of the PRS is colossal. The Chain-of-Custody Management Contract has been designed to

ensure this potential is fully captured and that Liberia can play a key role in an international timber market ruled by increasingly stringent procurement policies.

Fully aware of the long-term economic and governance improvement value of the Chain-of-Custody Contract, the Government of Liberia has decided to provide support of up to \$500,000 to cover management costs once the USAID grant dries up in a couple of months. This commitment should encourage international donors to also contribute financially to support the Chain-of-Custody Contract, ensuring that logging operations taking place in the next dry season are adequately monitored in partnership with FDA. On the back of the funding provided by the GoL, the World Bank has indicated that it may be able to contribute an additional

\$800,000, with 50% co-financed by DFID's (Department for International Development) support to the European Union's FLEGT (Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade) Program.

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FDA produces Forest Management Plan Guidelines

With financial and backstopping support from the US Forest Service and USAID, the consultancy Forêt Ressources Management (FRM) recently conducted a series of workshops to help the FDA produce Guidelines for drafting Forest Management Plans (FMPs). The result of this effort was not only a final draft Guidelines, but also the strengthened capacity of both the FDA and the private sector to implement sound management practices in timber concessions.

The final FMP Guidelines were the product of many voices and inputs. An initial series of meetings with the FDA helped to locate Sustainable Forest Management principles in

the Liberian context and to build the structure and content of the FMP Guidelines accordingly. After a draft Guidelines was produced and distributed, a multi-stakeholder consultative workshop was held to formally present the draft and solicit input from participants. Finally, a three-day private sector workshop enabled participants to further refine an almost final draft Guidelines and to strengthen companies' capacity to prepare FMPs.

All of the workshops began with an overview of the value of forest management planning. Of course, the most obvious incentive for companies to prepare an FMP is the law itself, which requires the FDA to

approve FMPs before logging can commence. But perhaps even more compelling is the argument that the drafting of FMPs makes economic sense. International buying markets are increasingly requiring logging companies to comply with more stringent trade controls that guarantee sustainably harvested timber. Further, sound forest management planning enables the contract holder to know what resources and features are contained in the concession – vital information that helps to minimize operational costs and maximize long-term sustainable production. Further still, by preparing and implementing an FMP, a company might be able to identify other aspects contained in the concession and devise schemes to capture their value, like setting up an ecotourism venture in a particularly rich area of biodiversity or attempting to monetize the increasing value of carbon storage. Indeed engaging in the activity of sound forest management planning demonstrates that profitability and sustainability are mutually reinforcing objectives.

FMPs are also important to Liberian society as their compliance ensures that the public in general and local communities in particular are benefiting from logging operations, and that the resources will be managed in a way to bring benefit to future generations.

Mindful of the imperative to restart commercial logging operations in Liberia as soon as

possible, workshop participants agreed to develop Guidelines that would enable companies to draft two versions of the FMP. The first version would be quickly produced and enable the company to commence operations while the more comprehensive final FMP was being prepared.

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The development of the FMP Guidelines, along with the administrative system to ensure that they are adhered to, marks a significant departure from the way forestry has traditionally happened in Liberia. Step by step, these Guidelines lay out a blueprint for operating a timber concession, which if followed, will ensure the sustainable management of the resource for many generations to come. The learning from the workshops, the Guidelines, and the continued technical assistance provided by the FDA and LFI Partners will be particularly relevant to the three current contract holders as they prepare to get operations running in the upcoming season.

The FMP Guidelines are presently available electronically from the LFI. Hard copies will be available at the end of August.

Honorable John T. Woods, FDA staff, and FRM's Nicolas Bayol at one of the workshops on developing FMP Guidelines.



Customary Lands, forest resources and conflict

Understanding existing customary land tenure arrangements is crucial to defining equitable community forest resource access and use rights. USAID's Land Rights and Community Forestry Program (LRCFP) is one of several For-

estry Development Authority (FDA) partners engaged in assisting the development of a framework for the practice of community forestry in Liberia. The program works with "pilot" communities in Nimba and Sinoe Counties to enhance forest

resource governance and management capacity, and to promote livelihood opportunities. This experience in turn informs the evolving national policy and institutional framework for community forestry. Land tenure and property

rights reform is a high priority for the Government of Liberia, but has a complex and confused history reflected in the many land disputes documented in newspaper headlines. The work of FDA and its LFI partners in community

forestry provides useful case studies of customary tenure issues across much of rural Liberia.

One such example that LRCFP is engaged with is overlapping forest land rights in and around the East Nimba Nature Reserve (ENNR). The reserve was gazetted by an act of congress in 2003, though local communities feel that they were not consulted about establishing the Reserve, and that this law impinges on their customary land and forest resource rights. Nature Reserve status precludes legal consumptive use of forest resources, yet communities were not compensated for loss of access to these resources. Community members successfully resisted attempts to demarcate the Reserve on the ground early in 2008. LRCFP has facilitated participatory mapping using satellite imagery with two communities adjacent to/overlapping ENNR to outline customary land areas, and has thereby clarified the scope of several land tenure issues in and around the Reserve. The two communities, Gba to the west of ENNR and Zor to the east, were able to draw and explain their customary land areas on overlays of the imagery.

Several issues emerge from this mapping exercise. The two communities claim most of ENNR as their customary land – and largely agree on their contiguous

boundary. In the southern section of ENNR and to the west of the Reserve in this area, however, Zor and Gba have overlapping land areas that include Blei Forest and Bassa Village. Gba also overlaps with the West Nimba National Forest designated by FDA. The Blei forest overlap is rooted in history whereby Zor granted the newly arrived Gba community rights to land including the western section of the Reserve in the middle of the 20th century – but there is now dispute as to which community Bassa Village and its environs and forest resources belong. Clearly, such a conflict cannot be resolved overnight – and will in any case need to be referenced to how customary land tenure is addressed by the national land reform process. However, forests can be effectively managed as long as such conflicts are addressed using appropriate neutral facilitation skills and mechanisms. LRCFP, using conflict management techniques, has worked with the two communities to agree on establishing a Joint Forest Management Committee. Participatory analysis revealed the complexity of the dispute, which included historic, ethnic, and socio-economic dimensions, but the workshop also allowed communities to focus on issues that can be resolved to the benefit of all parties. This committee continues to work with assistance from LRCFP to maintain both communities' rights and access to

forest resources through mutual respect and enforcement, and is currently assessing Blei forest resources with community members as a prelude to developing access and use guidance.

Moving outward from this specific dispute, LRCFP will work with FDA to apply similar approaches to the management of forest resources across the northern Nimba County landscape, including ENNR and West Nimba National Forest. As the land area covered in this way expands, new and more complex stakeholder interactions and conflicts will emerge. Indeed, LRCFP's training needs assessment for community forestry in 2008 recognized conflict management as a crucial area of train-

ing for all stakeholders in community forestry. As a contribution to this training, the Nimba case study was used in LRCFP conflict management training for FDA and its partners in February 2009.

In conclusion, simple use of modern technology (satellite imagery), participatory mapping and application of conflict management techniques can lead to workable forest resource management solutions – even where a fundamental conflict (land ownership) remains unresolved. Given the lack of clarity regarding customary land ownership in Liberia, and the length of time envisaged before land policy law and administration are resolved and applied to specific cases, effective land conflict analysis and conflict management are powerful tools in community forestry.

An FDA Conflict Management Training



President Johnson-Sirleaf Visits Sapo National Park Headquarters

En route to officially open the Sinoe County dialogue, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf made a special detour to meet FDA staff and Fauna & Flora International (FFI) project managers at the Sapo National Park headquarters, Sinoe County.

Sapo National Park,

Liberia's first and largest National Park, was created in 1983 and covers an area of some 1844 km². It is home to many endemic plant and animal species, including the endangered Pygmy Hippo, Forest Elephant and Zebra Duiker. Together, the protected SNP and East Nimba Nature Reserve represent only 4.6% of Liberia's re-

maining forests. But with increasing threats from commercial logging, mining and agricultural development, there is an urgent need to increase the area under protected area status. Within the next 5 years, the FDA hopes to create a network of 12 additional protected areas which, along with the existing

reserves, will safeguard 30% of the remaining forests in Liberia.

FFI has been a key partner to the FDA in the management of Sapo National Park. In 1997, FFI helped restart the management of Sapo, after years of civil disruption, which had resulted in the complete collapse of the Park infrastructure. In 2001, FFI



The President touring Sapo National Park with Theo Freeman (on her left), Technical Manager for Conservation at the FDA

assisted in the creation of a biological monitoring program at the Park, which subsequently evolved into a rapid ecological assessment tool. This has been used across Liberia to identify and prioritise areas that should be upgraded into Liberia's protected area scheme.

President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and her entourage were greeted at the Park by Theo Freeman, Technical Manager of the Conservation Department, F.D.A. Morris Kamara, Protected Area Manager and Jallah Johnson, Acting Chief Park Warden. Also present were FFI technical staff; Micheal Abedi-Lartey, Chief Technical

Advisor, Richard Sambolah, Technical Advisor - Community Forestry and Fiona Pamplin, Technical Assistant, Communications.

During her visit to the Park headquarters, President Johnson-Sirleaf graciously agreed to attend a short presentation by Mr. Kamara. He covered the history and ecology of the park, highlighting the impressive botanical and faunal diversity, most of which is endemic to Liberia or to the Upper Guinea Forest Ecosystem. The President was particularly impressed by the results of the Zoological Society of London's camera trapping

programme, implemented in partnership with F.F.I. and the FDA,, which has captured images of species of high conservation importance such as the pygmy hippo, Western Chimpanzee and Jentink's duiker.

Mr Kamara also outlined some of the challenges facing conservation efforts. One of the most serious is the occupation of Sapo National Park by illegal miners. It is estimated that there are over 2,000 people living in camps inside the park, many of whom are foreigners from neighbouring West African countries. Not only is mining strictly illegal, but such activities seriously damage the forest environment, causing pollution of waterways and destruction of aquatic eco-systems. The miners and their supporters are also responsible for an alarming amount of bushmeat hunting, also illegal within the Park boundaries and of particular concern when it includes endangered species such as the bongo, giant pangolin and black and white colobus monkey.

Clearly concerned by the facts presented, the President agreed that the illegal occupants are posing a serious threat to the biodiversity of the Park and that their presence is hindering conservation interventions by the FDA and partner organisations. She went on

to assure those gathered that she would ask the Government to put together a team to oversee the removal of illegal miners and hunters from Sapo National Park. However the President stressed the need to use persuasive means through extensive stakeholder consultation to encourage those in the Park to leave on a voluntary basis.

Before leaving, President Sirleaf pledged her continued support to the park and said that she would be following progress on the various initiatives with interest.

Photo of a Pygmy Hippo from a motion-sensor camera and a Zebra Duiker in Sapo



Value Chain Development in Conservation

As part of its new strategic direction, Conservation International will pilot a value chain learning and knowledge sharing agenda to test the hypothesis that economic development and conservation goals may be achieved within biodiversity rich landscapes, even where there are strong economic pressures. It will apply a value chain approach to improve the socio-economic status of households involved in conservation activities in and

around Protected Areas.

With funding from USAID through QED Group LLC, the three-year project is intended to address two related needs through a learning network. Firstly, it will foster greater inter-team collaboration and learning related to value chain-based approaches by supporting experiential program exchanges to build and support communities, and by initiating activities which would expand adoption of

value chain-based approaches by sharing learning across sectors and country programs through the Field Implementation Strategy. Secondly, it will integrate the approach into landscape planning processes by supporting value chain development programs with local partners, and by providing technical assistance internally to buy down the perceived risk and high cost of adoption of the value chain approach.

The Field Implementation Strategy will be the vehicle for knowledge transfer and experiential learning, tying value chain approaches together across partner organizations. CI will work in Lake Piso, Wologizi and Wonegizi — proposed protected areas of Liberia, where the Green Economies approach will be employed.

Livelihoods and landscape strategy (sequel to LFB No. 1)

Two “pilot” community sites (Zangar Town in Grand Bassa County and Garpue Town in River Cess County) have been selected based on the results of the study of seven selected local communities coupled with objective criteria. The selected communities form part of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature’s (IUCN’s) “pilot” landscapes in 29 countries to improve local livelihoods and expand the economic opportunities of the rural poor. In addition, it is expected that action learning lessons will inform broader policies to reduce poverty, and conserve forests.

Representatives from both the two chosen communities, as well as from the five that were not selected, were invited to a three-day work-

shop in Monrovia from 11-13 May. In addition, representatives from the government agencies, donors/development partners and NGOs (local and international) were invited. The workshop was facilitated by the staff of the IUCN, Environmental Foundation for Africa (EFA), the FDA and the University of Liberia (UL).

The objectives of the workshop were: to build the capacity of the seven communities to enable them to present their identified needs effectively to partners/donors for support; to encourage the sharing of experiences and lessons among all the seven studied communities; and to seek possible partnerships with interested organizations to work in synergy at the two selected “pilot” communities.

The first two days of the workshop were spent developing a project brief by the communities for presentation in a PowerPoint format to the invited partners/donors for support. The briefs included an articulation of the priority needs of communities, proposed structures for community decision-making, and a list of potentially marketable forest products in the landscapes. A member of each community was trained to make the presentation of his/her community’s project brief to the 40+ workshop participants on the third day.

The representative of the Senate Committee on Rural Development (SCRD) was pleased with the approach of letting communities themselves identify and present their problems for assistance that in turn

will enable the GoL to know the real situation on the ground. The community representatives were appreciative of their newly built capacity to relate directly to donors. Leads to support came from the MFEP and SCRDC. The shared experiences and lessons included: the use of the participatory maps developed under the IUCN study to resolve local land disputes (Zerwodamai in Lofa County and Sembahun in Grand Cape Mount County); identification of valuable NTFPs (e.g. bush pepper, medicinal plants, etc.) that are common to the communities; the need for local revenue generation from the exploitation of valuable natural forest products; and the development of sustainable management schemes for common property resources (e.g. “Kiss Meat”, bush meat, poles etc.)

FDA strengthening its capacity to manage resources

The FDA’s Victoria Cole and Evangeline Nyantee recently participated in the International Seminar on Watershed Management.

Discussions topics included

In late 2008, the FDA’s Charles Miller also participated at an international seminar concerning Forest Administration.

Every year, the US Forest Service conducts a series of international seminars aimed at engaging the global network of natural resource managers and strengthen the capacity to address common challenges. To

date, the US Forest Service International Programs Office has sponsored seven FDA staff to participate in the educational exchanges.

The FDA’s Victoria Cole and Evangeline Nyantee at the Grand Canyon during a training on watershed management



Two ITTO projects get under way

Based on an assessment of the priority needs of Liberia’s forestry sector and with assistance from international donors, two important projects that will extend for about

two years each were recently launched by the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO). One project will aim to build the capacity of Liberia’s current and next genera-

tion of foresters, and the other will assist the FDA to develop and implement a national policy on reforestation.

The capacity strengthening project (roughly \$357,000) will support the reestablishment of

forest education for mid-level forestry technicians. The ‘deliverables’ of the project will include the design of curricula, the training of trainers, and the immediate education of students registered at the Forestry Training Institute (FTI) in Tubman-

Liberia Forest Initiative



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More information on the LFI is also available at:
<http://www.fao.org/forestry/29020/en/>

burg. The project will also support a national working group that conducts a gap analysis of forestry education, and devises an action plan for strengthening Liberia's two existing forestry institutions – FTI and the College of Agriculture and Forestry at the University of Liberia. The first Steering Committee meeting for this project will take place on 23-26 September.

The other project (roughly \$510,000) will address the fact that Liberia currently lacks a national reforestation policy and the technical capacity to implement it. It will determine the status of existing plantations and develop policy positions that consider biofuel and firewood production, watershed protection, enrichment planting, and agroforestry, among others. The project will be implemented by the FDA in close consultation with civil society organizations, the private sector and the two forestry educational institutes – FTI and LU.

On the horizon

- Publication of the Forest Management Plan Guidelines (August)
- Technical assistance to contract holders to prepare FMPs (ongoing)
- Strengthening the leadership, organizational and accounting capacity of Community Forestry Development Committee Members (ongoing)
- The formation of a Steering Committee to guide policy discussions on pit sawing (August)
- LFI Meeting (September)
- The launch of the FAO's National Forest Programme Facility (September)

In 2004, the US State Department engaged a number of US agencies, including the US Forest Service, US Agency for International Development and the US Treasury, as well as NGOs, to launch the Liberia Forest Initiative. Shortly thereafter, the World Bank and other organizations joined, giving the LFI a strong multilateral and multinational character. The LFI aims to provide coordinated support to the Liberian forest sector. It is particularly focused on assisting with reforms that will allow for the transparent management of forest resources and will ensure that benefits from forests are equitably shared by all Liberians. The LFI is committed to helping the Government of Liberia balance competing demands on forests. Although an informal coordinating mechanism, the LFI seek to form a common position among its partners and with other stakeholders on forestry issues. LFI achievements include • a review of the state of forestry in 2004-2006 • the design of a roadmap for reform • the passage of the 2006 National Forestry Reform Law • 10 Core Regulations • the drafting of the Code of Harvesting Practices • helping the FDA to become a more functional, performance-driven agency • technical and organizational support to draft a Community Rights Law • the activation of the nationwide chain-of-custody log-tracking system • significant improvements in the contract tendering and awarding process.

