

Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species

Half Year Report (due 31 October each year)

Project Ref. No.	15/039
Project Title	Participatory Implementation of a management plan, Maderas Volcano Natural Reserve, Nicaragua
Country(ies)	Nicaragua
UK Organisation	Fauna & Flora International
Collaborator(s)	Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARENA), Amigos de la Tierra España, Fundación entre Volcanes, Carlos Diaz Cooperative,
Report date	14 November 2006
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Project website	N/A

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) against the agreed baseline timetable for the project (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up).

This Darwin Initiative project has already helped leverage further co-financing for complementary activities on the island of Ometepe; FFI are now also executing a parallel project entitled "Integrated Management of Diverse Island Habitats Significant for Neotropical Migrants" funded by the US Fish & Wildlife Service (US\$120,305 over 2 years). This, combined with co-funding already secured (including funds from the corporate sector, from British American Tobacco Central America) is strengthening overall project activities in and around the Maderas Volcano Natural Reserve (MVNR) and will maximize effectiveness in the use of funds in the implementation of complementary activities.

Introduction of Darwin Initiative project to stakeholders

One of the first priorities of the project was to meet with all project stakeholders on Ometepe and present the project activities to them; two general meetings were held in the month of May and an overview workshop conducted in June.

Finalisation of revised Management Plan for MVNR

The initial phase of this Darwin Initiative project overlapped with the finalisation of the newly revised management plan for the Maderas Volcano Natural Reserve (regarding which FFI signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Amigos de la Tierra (España) and the local NGO Fundación Entre Volcanes at the end of 2005). Amigos de la Tierra led the development of this plan through a series of open consultation and negotiation workshops, with full and active participation of the local communities and other stakeholders. Between April and July three workshops were held to present the contents of the management plan and to validate its proposals with the 10 communities living on the flanks of the volcano and local organizations (economic, social and environmental NGO's). At one of these workshops a discussion was held and agreement reached regarding proposed new boundaries for the Reserve. It was also agreed by general consensus to solicit a formal change to the status of the Reserve, from a Natural Reserve to a National Park, and this proposal has now been submitted to the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARENA). The agreed management plan will be finalised by the end of November 2006 and it is anticipated that it will be officially approved by the government at the beginning of 2007.

Co-management of Maderas Volcano Natural Reserve

The process to officially establish a new co-management structure for MVNR is underway. There has been significant buy-in to this process by all key actors and several meetings have been held with MARENA to agree on the required procedure. Two workshops on this topic were held in July and August and a local committee has been formed between the Municipality of Altagracia, the local NGO Fundación Entre Volcanes, local representatives from four communities, the Cooperative Carlos Díaz, and representatives from local tourism businesses. FFI is sitting alongside this committee as a technical advisory body. The Municipality is the organization who will formally present the co-management proposal to the government (in November 2006) and the legal agreement will be signed by them.

However, it is sought that the local committee will also be legalized in some way as part of the co-management agreement, thereby reaching a pioneering participative model for co-management in the country. It is anticipated that the institutional process will be finished and the legal agreement signed by the end of the year.

Park staff recruited

Local personnel have been recruited as Park Rangers (five in total) and a Park Manager for the Reserve. The selection procedure was undertaken with the participation of a local commission, including indigenous groups. The Park staff will all start working in November – this is later than originally anticipated due to negotiations with MARENA regarding the recruitment and contracting process (complicated by the fact that they will be MARENA staff, but paid externally by project funds), combined with the speed of MARENA procedures. This issue has now been resolved; for the first 6 months the park guards will be hired directly by MARENA, transferring to the employ of the new co-management entity, once it is in place.

Biodiversity monitoring – equipment and protocols

Regarding the biodiversity component of the project, all field equipment has now been procured and the methodology and protocols for monitoring biodiversity in the reserve have been defined. Detailed survey work, with a focus on migratory birds, will begin in November.

Ranger training

Training of park guards in enforcement and monitoring has not yet begun due to the delay explained above in the hiring process. However the first training sessions are planned and will take place, one in November and another in December.

2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

Although the legal establishment of a co-management structure for the reserve is an objective of this project, the lack thereof has led to significant delays in the contraction and training of park personnel – it has taken almost 4 months of discussion and negotiation the MARENA to reach an agreeable interim mechanism for the contraction of these staff.

Slight alterations to the execution of certain activities and project budget have been requested and granted by the Darwin Secretariat. Specifically, the training park guards will now be conducted using national expertise, since it was decided that sufficient expertise and experience exists in Nicaragua to carry out these training sessions. Furthermore, it was felt that national professionals will bring detailed knowledge of national legislation pertaining to protected area management, as well as knowledge of national biodiversity.

Total expenditure in the first 5 months of the project (to end September 2006) is low in comparison to the total budget for year 1. However, infrastructure construction is due to begin after the rainy season (January) and salary expenditure will be higher from now on as all personnel are now contracted. Accordingly our expenditure plan for the remainder of Year 1 is on track with the original budget. If any delays are experienced in the next quarter, and this situation changes, we shall let the Darwin Secretariat know immediately.

Have any of these issues been discussed with the Darwin Secretariat and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Merging of Biodiversity Consultant and Protected Areas Specialist budget-lines and use of national expertise in ranger training was discussed and agreed with the Darwin Secretariat in September 2006. No changes to the original agreement were necessary.

Discussed with the DI Secretariat: yes, in September 2006

Changes to the project schedule/workplan: no

3. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

Not at this stage.

If you were asked to provide a response to this year's annual report review with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan or budget should not be discussed in this report but raised with the Darwin Secretariat directly.

Please send your **completed form by 31 October each year per email** to Stefanie Halfmann, Darwin Initiative M&E Programme, stefanie.halfmann@ed.ac.uk . The report should be between 1-2 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message.**