

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2008)

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| 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) | Nicaragua Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARENA) NGO Fundación Entre Volcanes (FEV) Carlos Diaz Cooperative National Institute of Tourism (INTUR) Unión de Guías de Ometepe (UGO) |
| Project Leader | Alison Gunn |
| Report date | 26 th October 2008 |
| Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4) | HYR 3 |
| Project website | www.fauna-flora.org/ometepe.php |

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).

The last six months of this project have witnessed some notable achievements in the progress of this project, including the achievement of some key outstanding milestones.

Co-management of the Reserve: The co-management rights for the Maderas Volcano Natural Reserve (MVNR) were formally granted to the Alcaldia of Altagracia by MARENA in May 2008. This key milestone had suffered severe delays during the course of the project, primarily due to new Nicaraguan administration in early 2007 which severely slowed bureaucratic processes; the legal formation and approval of the Reserve's management entity represents a long-awaited major step forward.

Legal analysis of land rights & regulations: Two legal analyses were completed and results published (reports enclosed) – one clarifies the environmental laws applicable to the island (two different legal instruments apply) and the other presents findings on land rights and tenancy in and around MVNR. The analysis of land rights took longer to complete than originally planned, in large part because of the informal way in which many deed transfers and tenancy agreements have taken place and the absence of government measures to streamline land/property registration processes. This report highlights this need, alongside the need for MARENA to request from central government the right to manage state owned land on Ometepe.

Tourism & Awareness: A holistic environmental education and interpretation plan (*'Plan de interpretación ambiental'*) has been developed and published (copy enclosed), building on progress to date. This study forms the basic curriculum and plan from which park guards and educators communicate with visitors and students. It also analyses the full cost of further infrastructure improvements, including enhancement of the trail to the summit of Maderas volcano, which at >\$200,000 is outside the scope of this project, but will enable a fundraising plan to be put into place. This reporting period has also seen ongoing improvement to tourism trails, interpretive displays, and the refurbishment of an existing building as a guard outpost and environmental education centre.

A website for the United Guides of Ometepe has been developed and is now live (www.ugometepe.com). Providing an excellent resource for tourists, it serves as a platform from which guides can advertise their services and products. A website for the MVNR is currently under development, with a logo designed in conjunction with students from Dutch

organisation On-Stage.

Mechanisms for financial sustainability: This reporting period saw the publication of the findings of the project's research on achieving financial sustainability for the Reserve. The publication entitled '*Mecanismos de Sostenibilidad Financiera*' (enclosed with this report) is a thorough analysis of appropriate and innovative financial mechanisms and outlines the critical path for achieving long-term financial sustainability for the Reserve. The two main fund generating mechanisms will be the entry fee for visitors to the reserve and charges for the use of trails. Even with pessimistic projections illustrate that within 5 years these mechanisms should be recuperating 90% of the actual spend on basic management and 53% of the requirements for optimal management of the Reserve. The tariff system for entry to the Reserve has been established and is in force.

The following project publications are enclosed with this report:

- Training manual for park rangers and guides - '*Memoria de capacitación y certificación de guías turísticos locales y guarda parques*'
- Análisis of mechanisms for financial sustainability - '*Mecanismos de Sostenibilidad Financiera*'
- Environmental education & interpretation plan - '*Plan de interpretación ambiental*'
- Analysis of environmental laws relating to the management of Ometepe Island – '*Análisis de la legislación ambiental aplicable al manejo de la Isla de Ometepe*'
- Analysis of land rights '*Análisis de la tenencia de la tierra*'
- MARENA management report for the Reserve – '*Gestion administrativa y operativa de MVNR y la Isla Ometepe*'
- Bird Checklist for Ometepe Island
- Map & Tourist Guide 2007-08

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.

In May the Minister of MARENA stated that they want to promote the declaration of Ometepe as a Biosphere Reserve. FFI is supporting the government and stakeholders on the island in this process to seek UNESCO recognition. Whilst this is a new development, this does not affect the implementation of the current project.

The environmental interpretation analysis and plan calculated the cost of improving the trail all the way up Maderas volcano to be far greater than originally anticipated. The completion of this is therefore outside the scope of this DI project.

The tragic and untimely death of a key member of the project team, Teresa Zuniga, in September deeply shocked and saddened the project team. This terrible event, however, has also had a significant binding effect amongst the whole conservation community in Nicaragua, which we hope to continue to build upon. Project activities remain on track and are a testament to the legacy Teresa leaves for conservation on Ometepe.

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

No changes are necessary.

Discussed with the DI Secretariat: no/yes, in..... (month/yr)

Changes to the project schedule/workplan: no/yes, in.....(month/yr)

3. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures? No

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 email** to Eilidh Young, Darwin Initiative M&E Programme at Darwin-Projects@ectf-ed.org.uk . The report should be between 1-2 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message eg Subject: 14-075 Darwin Half Year Report**