

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2007)

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, Alcaldía de Altagracia
Project Leader	Alison Gunn
Report date	26 th October 2007
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	HYR – 2
Project website	http://www.fauna-flora.org/ometepe.php Ometepe website under construction

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).

Overall the project remains on track and is benefiting from strong local collaboration. The main delays relate to coordination with the new MARENA administration which came into office at the beginning of 2007, since when centralization of decision making authority has significantly slowed their bureaucratic processes.

Management Plan: The new Management Plan for Maderas Volcano Natural Reserve has been submitted to the Nicaraguan authorities and its official approval was expected in May 2007. However this document is still pending official endorsement by the new government administration, despite all requested revisions having been made. The proposal to increase the Reserve's legal protection by changing its protected area status to that of a National Park and by extending its boundaries (doubling its size from 4,100 to almost 8,000 hectares) is also being processed by government authorities. FFI and partners continue to maintain this on MARENA's agenda.

Infrastructure Construction: The construction of the park management/ranger office has been completed, at a key site at the start of one of the principal trails up the side of the volcano. Photos of the official opening, which was attended by the MARENA representatives, the local Mayor and Police Chief, amongst others, have been supplied to Darwin Secretariat. Other infrastructure improvements, including improved signage (in accordance with MARENA's guidelines for protected area signage in Nicaragua) and trails, are already in place or being designed. In addition, two long term biodiversity monitoring stations have been put in place, and a third is planned for the upper slopes of the volcano. FFI and local partners are agreed that no permanent buildings are necessary in these field stations and that infrastructure funds should be directed to improving the trails up the volcano (which continue to erode every rainy season).

Management Entity; Following the change in national government that took place in January 2007, the process to select and legally establish the co-management entity continues to suffer delays. The new administration is undertaking a review of co-management of all its protected areas and, although MARENA has unofficially stated its intention to continue with the process of establishing co-management for Maderas, the process for MVNR remains delayed. FFI has made a significant effort at a political level to highlight to the government the importance of moving this process forwards, including bringing it to the attention of the new Minister herself. (NB. see note in Box 2 regarding recent signing of a new MoU between FFI and MARENA).

PA co-management training: In June the park guards and reserve manager, alongside representatives

from the local authorities, visited Cosiguina Volcano in the north-west of Nicaragua which is managed locally by Fundacion LIDER. This initial visit provided a valuable insight into one shared conservation management model "in action", as one of a series of visits to five protected areas under co-management.

Training: Delivery of a series of 13 training workshops throughout 2007 began in June. This comprehensive training programme for the new MVNR Park Guards and local tourist guides on the island (a total of 25 of people) focuses on its diversity of flora and fauna (mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles & insects), archaeology, history and culture of the island, local geography, and environmental education and has been officially accredited by the Nicaraguan Institute of Tourism. We have also facilitated training in national environmental legislation and regulations for local authorities (municipal and police), community leaders and park staff. This training programme has been co-financed by SwissContact (the Swiss Development Agency).

Raising Environmental Awareness: Having also been trained in environmental education techniques, the park rangers are now coordinating monthly educational and awareness activities with local schools and students in the rural communities of the MVNR buffer zone. For example UNEP's World Environment Day was celebrated on 5 June 2007 with a special festival organized at one of the local schools.

Tourism and Awareness strategy: Working in collaboration with the Nicaraguan Institute of Tourism (INTUR), FFI has teamed up with SwissContact (a Swiss non-profit development organization) and local tourism enterprises to promote, and regulate, responsible tourism on the island. As part of this effort a promotional magazine for the island is being developed. The process of tourism planning for the island is underway, with FFI providing technical support to this process. A situation analysis focused upon MVNR and the istian isthmus began in May 2007 in order to collate information about the area's natural resources, the existing trails and other infrastructure, alongside tourism numbers and activity, which will feed into tourism guidelines and the island-wide planning process.

FFI, USAID and Amigos de la Tierra (España), have also collaborated on the development and publication of a bird identification guide for Ometepe, aimed at the international birding tourism market and in line with a regionally recognized and standardized format.

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.

The main external constraint on the project execution relates to the centralization of government control and decision making power since the new administration in Nicaragua came into office at the beginning of 2007. This has affected MARENA's Department of Protected Areas, significantly slowing their bureaucratic processes and therefore the official authorization of key project outputs and documents. Nevertheless in October 2007, MARENA signed a new MoU with FFI regarding our work on Ometepe, which included vital agreements - regarding our joint intention to promote co-management on the island, and the approval of the management plan, etc - and we are hopeful that this will catalyze progress.

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

These issues were mentioned in our Year 1 annual report. However we do not anticipate this affecting the execution of Year 2 funds. Should this not be the case we shall duly notify the Secretariat.

Discussed with the DI Secretariat: not since Annual report

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? 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**