How to handle a hotspot

An ITTO project has initiated processes for the conservation and sustainable development of a transboundary conservation area on the border between Bolivia and Peru

by
Lucas Benites[1]
and
Clea Paz[2]

[1]Peru Coordinator
ITTO project PD 17/00 Rev.3

[2]Bolivia Coordinator
ITTO project PD 17/00 Rev.3

Photo: L. Benites

TOGETHER, the southeastern corner of Peru and an adjoining remote area of northern Bolivia comprise what is possibly the most biodiverse region on the planet. It is known to contain more than 850 bird species, 103 amphibians, 1200 butterflies, more than 150 tree species per hectare and about 4700 vascular plant species. However, the region has been under pressure in recent years; a number of (unsustainable) activities such as mining, illegal logging and unplanned road construction, among others, has led to environmental degradation and forest loss.

... the southeastern corner of Peru and an adjoining remote area of northern Bolivia comprise what is possibly the most biodiverse region on the planet.

The bi-national ITTO PROJECT PD 17/00 REV. 3 (F): *Conservation and development in the natural protected areas system of Tambopata (Peru)-Madidi (Bolivia)* is financed by ITTO and implemented by Conservation International in cooperation with the National Institute for Natural Resources (INRENA) of Peru and the National Service for Protected Areas (SERNAP) of Bolivia. Its focus is the System of State-Protected Natural Areas (SPNA) of Tambopata-Madidi, which comprises the Tambopata Candamo Reserved Zone (RNT) and the Bahuaja Sonene National Park (PNBS) in Peru and the Madidi National Park and Integrated Management Area (PNANMIM) in Bolivia; it has a total area of influence of about 2.85 million hectares. The overall objective of the project is to help achieve a balance between the utilization and conservation of the SPNA's natural resources.

Peru actions

In Peru, the project collated geo-spatial coverage metadata for the RNT and the PNBS to establish an information base, and information was collected for the micro-zoning of a sustainable harvesting area in the RNT.

Based on this information, research was conducted to identify sustainable development options. This included the analysis and development of a management plan for palmiche (*Geonoma deversa*), which is used as a roofing material (see article in *TFU* 16/2). A study on tourism potential in the Malinowsky River area was also carried out to find ways of discouraging mining activities there. At the same time, a site-specific plan was developed for the upper Tambopata River, which has special significance because it flows through both protected areas. In addition, an optimal road network was developed for the harvesting of Brazil nut (*Bertollethia excelsa*) in order to minimize the impact of these operations.

The project also strengthened INRENA in the development and implementation of training programs for its staff, identifying existing needs and developing specific educational modules. All of this has been included in the framework of a management monitoring plan for the area so that it can be used to adjust strategies and improve efficiency in all activities.

Bolivian actions

In Bolivia, the project helped consolidate the protected areas system by supporting protection activities and developing

management instruments, including a management plan for the adjacent high-altitude Apolobamba National Natural Area of Integrated Management, a communications strategy, and specific regulations for the PNANMIM. The project strengthened the management committees of both areas. These committees are important for ensuring the participation of local communities in the management of protected areas.

To assist the sustainable development of the communities living in the area of influence of the PNANMIM, a number of forest products with market potential were identified, a management plan and business plan were developed, and studies were undertaken to improve the processing of majo (*Oenocarpus bataua*; see *TFU* 16/2), the milk and oil of which are now being marketed locally. A birdwatching station was built for the viewing of macaws and other parrots; this will be used for ecotourism by the Tacana communities in the area of influence of the PNANMIM in coordination with park personnel.

Binational cooperation

At the binational level, workshops were organized with the participation of regional authorities, SERNAP and INRENA authorities, diplomats and other relevant stakeholders. These workshops led to the development of a transboundary conservation strategy, which sets out the priority actions to be taken to ensure the conservation of the Tambopata-Madidi system.

In addition, a proposal was developed for administrative and criminal sanctions that penalize illegal activities by tourism operators in the transboundary protected areas. A proposal was also developed on a process to clarify access rights to the resources in protected areas by native Esse'ejas communities living in the area. Moreover, the administrative basis was established for a public tender process to grant access to a tourism concession in the transboundary region, while terms of reference and administrative procedures were proposed for the issuing of operational contracts for binational tourist routes.

Forest product overheads: palmiche is used for thatching roofs. *Photo: C. Arellano*

Given that it contains biodiversity of global significance, the SPNA warrants sustained international support. ITTO has provided generous financial backing, and a process for conservation and sustainable development involving governments, local communities and civil-society institutions is well under way. The first phase of the project is over; support for the next phase is now needed.

Photo: L. Benites