

Cross-Border Conservation Initiatives in Paraguay's Chaco and Pantanal

Annual GCP Report for Fiscal Year 2005 and 5 Year Close-out Report

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The overall goal of the USAID GCP Cross Border Project is to strengthen the capacity of Paraguayan public and private organizations to conserve biodiversity within the globally important ecoregions of the Chaco and Pantanal. This project develops innovative public and private sector conservation initiatives, in coordination with neighboring countries that share the same habitat types and river systems.

Aspirations/Objectives:

TNC has been playing an important role in building and strengthening civic society in Latin America in general and in Paraguay in particular. The entire Paraguayan society suffered lack of freedom and ignominy under several years of dictatorial governments during the "Cold War Era." During this period, many initiatives were prohibited and every movement of civic society was controlled and censored by an oppressive and strong military system, which ended abruptly in 1989, giving new hope for democracy and freedom that have been built since then.

Since the mid 1980s, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) has supported priority conservation initiatives in Paraguay. In 1987, USAID and the Conservancy played a key role in the establishment of the Conservation Data Center (CDC) within the Paraguayan National Park Service (DPNVS). Through the USAID funded Parks in Peril Program (PiP), TNC has also provided key technical assistance and funding for the development of the strategic plan for the National System of Protected Areas (SINASIP). The SINASIP Management Plan was published in 1994 and is still the principal planning tool and guide for conservation used in the country. The Nature Conservancy was also instrumental in fostering and consolidating the establishment of several conservation NGOs in Paraguay. Today, those NGOs are strong and consolidated institutions and leaders in their specific fields at national and international levels.

Since the late 1990s, The Nature Conservancy has focused on the protection of the *Defensores del Chaco National Park* (DChNP) and the development of an NGO, *Fundación para el Desarrollo Sustentable del Chaco* (DeSdel Chaco) through the Parks in Peril Program, USAID's Latin American and Caribbean Bureau and the USAID Mission in Paraguay. Since project inception, DeSdel Chaco has grown from one to nine staff members. In 2002, DeSdel Chaco was approved as a direct recipient of USAID funds. The PiP program included components that involve, collaborate with, and strengthen DPNVS and its CDC. In 2000, USAID awarded TNC a new 5-year project for the Paraguayan Chaco and Pantanal (LWA Chaco). The goal of this project was "To strengthen the capacity of Paraguayan public and private organizations to conserve biodiversity within the globally important ecoregions of the Chaco and Pantanal. The project will develop innovative public and private sector conservation initiatives, in coordination with neighboring countries that share the same habitat types and river systems." This project also complemented and reinforced the PiP Chaco project that ended in December 2004.

Through the USAID GCP Cross Border project, the Conservancy has established a stronger relationship with four other Paraguayan Conservation organizations. The *Instituto de Derecho y Economía Ambiental (IDEA)* is a Paraguayan environmental law NGO that has been instrumental and progressive in private lands conservation and policy work in Paraguay. *Guyra Paraguay* is the Birdlife International representative in the country and has worked with the Conservancy to implement science work in the Chaco, Pantanal and Upper Paraná Atlantic Forest ecoregions. *NATURAL*, created under this GCP project as the first Land Trust in South America, is working for private conservation in Paraguay. Lastly, *Fundación Moisés Bertoni (FMB)* is the first and most prestigious environmental institution in the country and the main hatchery for leadership and human resources in Paraguay and the region. FMB also manages the largest private reserve, the Mbaracayú Forest Reserve, which is the core area of the first Biosphere Reserve in Paraguay.

The USAID GCP Cross Border project has allowed TNC to help these Paraguayan NGOs to develop their own niches of expertise. Through their work with USAID and TNC's PiP project, DeSdel Chaco has developed strong community outreach skills which allowed the organization to work effectively with the diverse group of stakeholders present in the Chaco. Through USAID GCP Cross Border support, DeSdel Chaco has organized training of Paraguayan and Bolivian park guards in the Chaco. DeSdel Chaco's knowledge of communities, their extensive work in Defensores del Chaco National Park coupled with their vast knowledge of the flora and fauna of the Chaco make them the ideal organization for building coalitions for the development of conservation management plans across the Chaco region. At the same time, IDEA has become a recognized resource for environmental and legal information in the region, educating and disseminating quality information on environmental issues to the public and producing information on land tenure. IDEA has become the leading policy institution in Paraguay and a strong legal guardian of the natural patrimony of the country. Guyra Paraguay has become a science and technical resource, producing quality biological information throughout Paraguay using state-of-the-art technology. FMB has become a model institution in the country. In the past few years, FMB has increased its communication and training abilities and was thus more successful in establishing environmental issues in the media, raising awareness and knowledge in key sectors of society and the general population. *NATURAL* has consolidated its position as the main reference in private conservation activities among key stakeholders, searching for a better scenario for incentives and regulations to promote vital conservation activities among landowners, who own more than 80% of the Paraguayan territory. The previous mentioned institutions that were created and consolidated with this project have also joined forces with ProCosara and ENLACE in order to create ALIDES, which is the strongest and best known environmental network in Paraguay. ALIDES is having a highly positive impact in different fields related to environmental issues in the country and the region, and it is intended to continue as a platform for future challenges.

The Conservancy's programming for the USAID GCP Cross Border project worked to build on the strengths and geographic focus that each of these NGOs has developed over time within TNC's broad conservation vision for the Chaco and Pantanal ecoregions in Paraguay. Initially, a site-based approach was used to integrate biodiversity conservation on both public and private lands. This approach was centered on the development of conservation action plans (CAP) for

these ecoregions that also leveraged results of conservation systems and alliances at an ecoregional scale. The accomplishments expected over a five-year project period would set a strong foundation for continued integration of complementary projects, such as the “Gran Chaco Ecoregional Assessment Project”. In this context, The Nature Conservancy in partnership with a Core Team made up of the *Fundación Vida Silvestre Argentina* (Argentina), the *Fundación para el Desarrollo Sustentable del Chaco* (Paraguay) and the Wildlife Conservation Society (Bolivia) developed this project based on the best scientific information available, with support from regional institutions and researchers, through workshops with stakeholders interested in the conservation and sustainable development of the Chaco. The final products consist of a set of maps associated with a database that systematizes all available information related to the biodiversity of the region, indicating which elements require priority action and where to direct conservation efforts. In addition, it incorporates the results of strategy development carried out by the same stakeholders to address the challenges inherent in the region’s current development models. Thus, the ecoregional assessment becomes a powerful tool for future planning and conservation initiatives in the Gran Chaco region that is already attracting international support through a proposal submitted to the Inter-American Development Bank, through its Regional Public Goods Initiative.

Evolution:

Several challenges at varying degrees of difficulty have arisen during the life of this project. Many of them were due to the still incipient Paraguayan democracy and institutional weaknesses at all levels, especially, at the government level during the first years of this project. To a lesser degree, the lack of human resources was a continuous challenge toward accomplishment of milestones.

Previous to the initial implementation of this project, these challenges seemed to be easy to resolve and would have minimal impact on the project outcomes in general. However, from the beginning, their high and negative impacts on the project were very clear. For these reasons, the first years of project implementation were focused on building and strengthening institutional capacity and human resources. In addition, more scientific studies and data gathering were undertaken in order to fill the overwhelming lack of information, which in turn was necessary for planning and decision support.

In a similar context, as the project was implemented over the time, it was very obvious the strategic importance of conservation initiatives in private lands since an overwhelming percentage of Paraguay is in private hands (more than 80%). In order to be successful, it was very clear that conservation efforts should target large landowners, private reserve networks, cooperatives, communal lands, etc. The lack of incentives for conservation in private lands was the main challenge, especially, the economic ones. Also, the reciprocal mistrust among the environmental, private-productive and public sectors were and still are a main concern to be addressed in future initiatives.

Results and Products:

The most important milestones of this GCP project were accomplished during the 2005 fiscal year. Despite the difficulty in expressing the intangibles results of this GCP project, they could be summarized in the following main milestones that are directly or indirectly related to this project and encompasses positive results throughout the lifespan of this project:

1. UNESCO's designation of the "*Gran Chaco Biosphere Reserve*," with an area of 7.5 million hectares. This site is located in the Northern part of the country, by the borders of Bolivia and Brazil, linking two large Bolivian national parks with six Paraguayan national parks creating one of the largest conservation areas of Latin America. This new biosphere reserve has six Paraguayan national parks as core areas, encompassing 1.6 million hectares for strict conservation, and protecting high biodiversity areas of Dry Chaco and Pantanal ecoregions. Also, it protects a cultural heritage area, where the last members of the *Totobiegosode* tribe still hunt and gather untouched by modern civilization. It is a unique case in the Southern Cone region of South America. See <http://www.unesco.org/mab/>
2. The Paraguayan Congress passed a National Law for the creation of 4,500 hectares Private Reserve in "Cañada El Carmen" under the property of IDEA according to Paraguayan legislation. This new protected area is on the international border with Bolivia where another private reserve was created by PROMETA.
3. Guyra Paraguay has undertaken the "Training Workshop for Natural Area Managers." This important event was supported by an institutional agreement, without precedents, signed with *Secretaria del Ambiente (SEAM)*, *Facultad de Ciencias Agrarias de la Universidad Nacional de Asuncion* and *Aves Argentinas*.
4. Paraguay-Parana Waterway Strategic Workshop took place in the main Amphitheater of the Paraguayan Congress. This event was co-organized by Guyra Paraguay, *Secretaria del Ambiente (SEAM)* and the Environmental Commission of the Paraguayan Congress. This was the first event of its kind. It was very useful for getting together stakeholders from different sectors, which usually don't communicate and collaborate very well. Also, important technical and new updates on the project were provided to the participants. However, it is clear that follow-up activities should be undertaken in the future in order to address this complex international project.
5. The Guanaco scientific discoveries and related materials and activities. DeSdel Chaco prepared a "Poster Exhibit" in Asuncion and Loma Plata in order to raise awareness and educate the general public. The exhibit consisted of several large posters and maps from the Chaco ecoregion showing the recent Guanaco pictures, distribution maps and general information regarding conservation work undertaken by DeSdel Chaco.
6. City of Bahia Negra's Civic society building and strengthening through the civic committee, the EcoClub Pantanal and socioeconomic projects.

7. Municipalization of Bahia Negra, which is the gateway for the Paraguayan Pantanal and the main planning tool and stepping stone for future conservation initiatives in this ecoregion.
8. *Guyra Paraguay* and the *EcoClub Pantanal* presented a joint proposal to the World Bank's "Southern Cone Development Contest." This proposal, "*Paraguayan Pantanal: Communicating values and principles*" was awarded with US\$ 10,000 among 45 awardees at the final regional selection in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The activities for this project are being implemented. It has received internal support already from local stakeholders and will soon have its own cultural center and Communal Radio, which in turn will lead the way for future sustainability.
9. The 5.360 hectares land purchase (Lote1) by DesdelChaco in order to create their first private reserve and the Gran Chaco Ecological Corridor by the border of Bolivia, through the Parks in Peril Project.
10. The Gran Chaco Ecorregional Assessment Project (Funded by TNC and GCP). (1).
11. The Gran Chaco Natural Patrimony Project approved by the Inter-American Development Bank. (2).
12. Human resources and institutional capacity building and strengthening through several university and doctoral scholarships, training courses, workshops, internships, etc.
13. The national media campaign "Mi ambiente, Mi vida" undertaken by Fundacion Moises Bertoni that obtained a significant amount of media attention, which in turn, allowed it to influence local and national stakeholders toward positive environmental actions.

Conclusion:

Despite the impressive and positive accomplishments obtained by this GCP project, there is still a very obvious need to continue building and strengthening institutional capacity and human resources in Paraguay. It is advisable to invest in leadership to promote the renewal at high ranking levels and the creation of new NGOs in order to avoid monopolies and nepotism that could damage institutional sustainability. It is also important to continue to invest in scientific studies and data gathering to fill the information gap necessary for future planning and decision support.

It is vital to continue focusing on private conservation efforts in Paraguay through abatement of perverse disincentives. Most of these economic disincentives could be resolved through an aggressive communication campaign and building of alliances with the productive sectors and international markets in order to promote creative figures that are highly attractive to private owners (organic certification for timber, meat, dairy, grains and others). Also, the usually underestimated political power and high influence that the environmental sector has on the

government and public opinion could be used for protecting landowner's interests, who are highly persecuted and threatened by land squatters and corrupted politicians.

Lastly, it is important to strengthen the strategic alliance with the public sector, especially SEAM, *Fiscalia del Estado* and local governments in order to support environmental law enforcement, improvement of public institutional capacity and environmental legislation. At the landscape level, it is vital to continue previous efforts toward the creation and consolidation of trans-national conservation areas and ecological corridors, through the continuous support of local governments for the implementation of land-use planning tools and public policy.

Footnotes:

1) Gran Chaco Ecoregional Assessment Project:

<ftp://partner.roanoke@ftp.tnc.org/mmatsumoto/ReporteTecnico/> .

2) Conservation of the Gran Chaco's Natural Patrimony Project. IDB, Regional Public Goods Initiative:

<http://www.iadb.org/INT/rtc/BPR/consultas.cfm?language=English&ITEMIID=3&PARID=1>

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During FY05, the last year of the USAID GCP Cross Border Project, The Nature Conservancy has continued to consolidate activities from previous years. Focus areas have included the strengthening of civil society, increased environmental knowledge in and about the Chaco and Pantanal ecoregions, environmental training for local leaders, sustainable development projects for local communities, and the establishment of environmental policies to promote conservation on private and public lands.

Objective 1: To improve the focus of the Paraguayan Government and private sector on the conservation threats to the Pantanal and Chaco ecoregions.

Activity 1.1) Establishment of Conservation Mechanisms in the Pantanal:

Building on its work conducted under the USAID GCP Cross Border project in the Pantanal in FY02, FY03, and FY04, IDEA and Guyra will continue to build a conservation base in this remote part of Paraguay. To achieve this goal and consolidate results in this final year of the USAID GCP Cross Border project, several sub-activities were carried out in FY05.

a) Municipal Development in the Paraguayan Pantanal, phase II:

Anticipated Activities and Results:

- Final processing of necessary documents for the municipalization of Bahía Negra.
- Support and training for new local authorities in Bahía Negra’s municipal government. Topics will include legal issues associated with their position and environmental law. As the number of authorities will be small (likely no more than three) they will receive one-on-one training.
- Participation of local authorities in environmental workshops and discussions addressing biodiversity in the Pantanal.
- A limited amount of technical assistance for ongoing sustainable development projects (community gardens, community pharmacies, beekeeping and bakeries) that will lead to less dependence on the area’s biodiversity in Bahía Negra, Puerto Diana, and Puerto Esperanza to ensure their functioning over time.

After intense days of meetings and effort with national authorities, the Paraguayan Congress passed a national law that created the “Municipality of Bahía Negra,” in Northeastern part of the country, with an extension of 65,057 Km2. This was an important achievement for IDEA. The law will give better management resources to local stakeholders, who were actively trained in

environmental issues during the last three years. The stakeholders of the area have already established a civic committee and thus will not depend on a distant administrative office for managing their own destinies in this isolated town, which is the gateway to the Pantanal.

Departures from the Work Plan: The Municipality of Bahía Negra was created in July 2005, then, the National Electoral Justice called for a municipal election for November 2005. IDEA will not have the chance to train municipal authorities as planned since they would be elected after the closure of this project. Nevertheless, intensive training was provided to local stakeholders in the last months, in civic, legal and administrative issues that will provide the necessary tools for any potential authority of this small community.

b) Promotional materials for the Paraguayan Pantanal:

Anticipated Results/Outputs:

To develop educational and promotional materials documenting the importance of the Paraguayan Pantanal. (These materials will be submitted to USAID for review before publication.)

- Paraguayan Pantanal Biodiversity Brochure:
- Pantanal Bird Identification Card:

These educational and scientific materials were produced by Guyra Paraguay that reflect the importance of this ecoregion, and have been used in several trainings.

No departures from the Work Plan.

c) Continue the Consolidation and strengthening of Bahía Negra's conservation group:

Anticipated Results/Outputs:

1. Training of at least 15 members in bird and large mammal survey and monitoring techniques and in skills necessary to become ecotourism guides;
2. Implementation of a monthly “backyard” bird count (in the school environs) and active participation in the twice-yearly Neotropical Waterbird Census in the Río Negro.
3. Establishment of a small office, with Internet access and library;
4. Production of a magazine (edited by the members of the EcoClub) with information about the Pantanal;
5. Visit to Asuncion to meet with national authorities and conservation NGOs;
6. Planting of native tree species in selected areas of Bahía Negra;
7. Production of membership materials for the EcoClub (T-shirts, caps)

- IDEA and Guyra Paraguay have undertaken, in Bahia Negra, the workshop “Ambiente y Turismo de Naturaleza” with the participation of 19 persons from the EcoClub Pantanal, 9 of them were women.
- Also, Guyra Paraguay developed several training activities with the participation of 30 persons, 12 women, from this small community:
 - i. Talk on the importance of wetlands, biodiversity richness, threats and opportunities.
 - ii. Training course on water-bird census
 - iii. Preparation and dissemination of education materials.
 - iv. Preparation of merchandising materials: banners, shirts, caps, etc.
- *Guyra Paraguay* and the *EcoClub Pantanal* presented a joint proposal to the World Bank’s “Southern Cone Development Contest”. This proposal, “*Paraguayan Pantanal: Communicating values and principles*” was awarded with US\$ 10,000 among 45 awardees at the final regional selection in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The activities for this project are being implemented. They have already received internal support from local stakeholders and will soon count with its own cultural center and Communal Radio.

No departures from the Work Plan.

d) Environmental Management Plan for Bahía Negra:

Anticipated Results/Outputs:

1. Environmental Management Plan draft for the study and approval of the municipality authorities.
 2. Technical and legal assistance for the preparation, approval and implementation of this plan by municipality authorities.
- IDEA is finalizing the “Guide for Preparing a Municipal Development Plan”, which will complement other training activities to local potential authorities and leaders of this small community in the Paraguayan Pantanal.
 - The most important training provided, was a 4-day intensive workshop for local stakeholders, in civic, legal and administrative issues that will provide the necessary tools, for any potential authority of this small community that will have local elections in November 2005.
 - IDEA and Guyra Paraguay undertook a workshop in Bahía Negra called “Ambiente y Turismo de Naturaleza” with the participation of 19 persons from the EcoClub Pantanal, 9 of them were women.

Departure from the Work Plan: As explained in other activities, local municipal authorities will be elected in November 2006 after the closure of this project. For this reason, IDEA requested to change some of the outputs of this activity since this project ends before the mentioned elections.

e) Final evaluation of the activities in Bahía Negra and Paraguayan Pantanal:

Anticipated Results/Outputs:

1. 100 copies of this publication on hard and digital format documenting the final evaluations.
2. Launching event for the promotion of this publication among Pantanal stakeholders, including local and national authorities.

The digital version was presented to interested stakeholders in September 2005. IDEA is aggregating three major events in one, which will be undertaken in June 2006, in Bahia Negra (Paraguayan Pantanal). At this event, this publication will be launched, among other publications from other donors, as a closure and final evaluation of activities in the Paraguayan Pantanal.

No departures from the Work Plan.

Activity 1.2) Biological study for Chaco and Pantanal endangered “flagship and umbrella” species^(*):

Anticipated Results/Outputs:

1. One participatory workshop within DesdelChaco for technicians, in order to determine the best methodology and the selection of species for this study.
2. One report in digital and hard format on population data for the mentioned species: population density, structure and distribution.
3. Proposal for the long-term conservation for, at least one endangered species and its implications for the Northern Chaco Biosphere Reserve.

DesdelChaco undertook several training activities for biologists, park guards, students and volunteers, in the methodology for field surveying, species identification, habitat characteristics and geographical locations. Camelid specialists from WCS/Bolivia came to Paraguay to support this training with their colleagues in Paraguay. They also shared their experiences and gave recommendations based on their previous work with Guanacos across the border in Bolivia.

DesdelChaco prepared numerous communication materials and undertook an outreach and awareness campaign with the local stakeholders, including the military and the only two indigenous communities in the area (Pykasu and Ñu Guasu).

The elusive and shy Chacoan Guanaco is a *camelidae* species that is very rare and almost unknown in Paraguay. Through estimations, scientists believe there are only a few hundred individuals left dispersed among the borders of Bolivia and Paraguay in the vast Dry Chaco savannas and thorny scrublands.

A skull found by a remote dirt road in 1978 is the only record and scientific evidence of its presence in the country. Many specialists even doubted this evidence and resisted believing that this species could exist in Paraguay. This lack of evidence was seized by oil and gas investors who said the Guanacos were an invention from the environmental sector for stopping “national development and natural resources exploitation.”

DesdelChaco conducted several land and air surveys in the vast Guanaco’s natural habitat in Paraguay and after a few months, the biologists found several signs and have seen three isolated individuals but were unable to get convincing pictures of them. Later, they purchased special automatic cameras for wildlife survey that were dispersed in special locations for a month. Finally, in late June of this year, five wonderful Guanaco’s pictures were obtained from these cameras serving as irrefutable proof of its presence in the country.

After this first and important step was taken, DesdelChaco disseminated this great news throughout the area, acquiring national and international attention and appearing in leading newspapers and IUCN’s website (<http://www.sur.iucn.org/vitrina/noticia.cfm?passcodnot=1080>).

Other similar activities are under execution for other flagship species, giving special emphasis to Chacoan Peccary (*Catagonus wagneri*), Marsh Deer (*Blastocerus dichotomus*), Jaguar (*Pantera onca*) and Hyacinth Macaw (*Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus*). Also, a proposal for the long-term conservation of these species was submitted to the Darwin Initiative, IUCN and Fondation Esemble, by the end of September 2005.

Lastly, DeSdel Chaco prepared a “Poster Exhibit” in Asuncion in order to raise awareness and educate general audiences. The exhibit consisted of several large posters and maps from the Chaco ecoregion, showing the recent Guanaco pictures, distribution maps and general information regarding conservation work undertaken by DeSdel Chaco.

No departures from the work plan.

Activity 1.3) Non-timber Forest Products Guide for the Paraguayan Chaco:

Anticipated Results/Outputs:

1. 100 copies of the book in hard and digital format.
2. Launching event with Chaco stakeholders, including local and national authorities.

This book is under final edition and design and will be launched in a public event with local and national stakeholders.

This material was launched by DesdelChaco in two workshops, the first one for local stakeholders and the second one for media and national stakeholders. In the first case, during the book launching event, it was prepared as a festivity by local indigenous communities who demonstrated the several traditional uses of mesquite and non-timber forest products.

The material is used as a main reference for training in mesquite processing in indigenous communities and as educational material among local schools, indigenous and non-indigenous ones. This material is a good instructive tool and it is the first of its kind, therefore, it is highly appreciated among the mentioned sectors. Also, this publication, among other support activities,

has lead to a more efficient and higher production of mesquite products that are now under high demand and commercialization at local and national levels, generating needed income for indigenous communities. Furthermore, this effort is adding a significant nutritional value to daily meals, supporting the improvement of quality of life and the cultural heritage for indigenous communities in the Paraguayan Chaco, especially for school children.

No departures from the Work Plan.

Activity 1.4) Support the consolidation of public protected areas within the Northern Chaco Biosphere Reserve:

Anticipated Results/Outputs:

1. Co-management agreement within *Secretaria del Ambiente* and *Desdel Chaco* for the joint management of main protected areas in the Chaco.
2. Improvement of a visitor center and museum at *Defensores del Chaco National Park*
3. Titling process for the *Gran Chaco Corridor* and *Cabrera-Timane National Park*.

In June 2005, UNESCO designated the “*Gran Chaco Biosphere Reserve*”, with an area of 7.5 million hectares, as a new Paraguayan site of the global network, under the Man and the Biosphere Program (MAB). This is the second site in Paraguay, recognized as such, and is located in the Northern part of the country on the borders of Bolivia and Brazil, linking two large Bolivian national parks with six Paraguayan national parks creating one of the largest conservation areas of Latin America. This new biosphere reserve has six Paraguayan national parks as core areas, encompassing 1.6 million hectares for strict conservation and protecting high biodiversity areas of Dry Chaco and Pantanal ecoregions. It also protects a cultural heritage area where the last members of the *Totobiegosode* tribe still hunt and gather, untouched by modern civilization, a unique case in the Southern Cone region of South America. See <http://www.unesco.org/mab/>

TNC started to support this process two years ago through its local partner *Fundacion DesdelChaco*, under the Parks in Peril Project first, and presently under the LWA Chaco-Cross Border Project, both with USAID funds.

At the end of fiscal year 2005, *DesdelChaco* signed a general agreement with *Secretaria del Ambiente del Paraguay*, for the concession and private management of public protected areas in the Chaco and Pantanal ecoregions. The terms and details of this agreement went through legal review and a validation and participatory process in order to avoid risks and future problems. This process was unique and a turning point in the history of the Paraguayan Government, which has been very centralized and distrusted the environmental organizations.

At this moment, *DesdelChaco* is awaiting funds from other sources in order to accept the responsibility for managing *Defensores del Chaco National Park*, the most representative and largest public protected area of Paraguay with 780,000 hectares. It is also the center of the *Gran*

Chaco Biosphere Reserve, declared by national decree and recognized by UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Program.

IDEA and DesdelChaco are finalizing the titling process of Defensores del Chaco National Park, which is delayed given that it is facing the overlapping limits of several properties, including a military base. This process will require a great dose of political will that would finally determine the success of this complicated process.

Departures from the Work Plan: On Output 2- *Improvement of a visitor center and museum at Defensores del Chaco National Park:*

Secretaria del Ambiente del Paraguay (SEAM) obtained important resources for improving infrastructure in several national parks, including the visitor center and museum at Defensores del Chaco National Park. Therefore, it is not necessary to implement this activity with TNC funds. Also, although there was a significant improvement in the legal situation of *Defensores del Chaco National Park*, the title has not yet been transferred to *Secretaria del Ambiente del Paraguay*, which is dependent on the political will of Paraguayan authorities.

Activity 1.5) Support the Consolidation of a Cross Border Conservation Area: El Corbalan-Cañada el Carmen, within Bolivia and Paraguay:

Anticipated Results/Outputs:

- Preparation and installation of signs, auto-guided trails, welcome board in the conservation area in Paraguay owned by IDEA.
- Promotional materials for awareness campaign.
- Launching event in Asuncion for high media impact.
- At least two meetings within IDEA and PROMETA for management purposes.
- At least 4 field trips to the conservation area.
- Obtain private conservation status for an area in Paraguay owned by IDEA: Cañada El Carmen

IDEA prepared and installed signs, guided trails and information boards in this trans-boundary, private protected area.

In conjunction with PROMETA, IDEA prepared promotional materials and started an awareness campaign for local and national stakeholders.

The Paraguayan Congress passed a National Law for the creation of a Private Reserve in "Cañada El Carmen" under the property of IDEA, with an area of 4,500 hectares, according to Paraguayan legislation. This complicated, slow and costly process was finally overcome in the Congress by October 2005. By early November 2005, the national law was signed by President Duarte Frutos, officially enacting the law.

No departures from the work plan.

Activity 1.6) Promotion of Sustainable agriculture and cattle ranching among large land owners:

Anticipated Results/Outputs:

1. At least one workshop on sustainable practices, private conservation tools and environmental legislation for large ranchers and farmers.
2. Legal and technical support to large land owners who are interested in private conservation tools and the implementation of environmental legislation, RAMSAR site status, private conservation tools, etc.
3. At least three meetings in the field and two meetings in Asuncion with land owners, technicians, lawyers and SEAM officials.

IDEA and DesdelChaco made the initial contacts with large land owners under this initiative.

On August 12th, a first Workshop on “Sustainable Development for Large Landowners” was undertaken in Loma Plata, Chaco. Important stakeholders participated, including members of the powerful and large Mennonite Cooperatives. Also, this workshop obtained the technical support of the most respected and leading scientific institution in the Chaco (INNTAS).

After several field visits and reunions, a portfolio of private conservation tools and options was presented to large land owners who are interested in creating protected areas within their properties.

No departures from the work plan.

Activity 1.7) Other Conservation Initiatives:

As per prior work plans, the Conservancy has applied funds to any urgent conservation initiatives that has improved the focus of the Paraguayan Government and the private sector on conservation threats to the Pantanal and Chaco ecoregions that had arisen during the course of FY05.

During the course of fiscal year 2005, TNC and partners detected several key issues that required urgent actions and a minimal investment of funds. TNC requested and obtained USAID approval, on March 21st, for the following urgent activities:

1) Training workshop for Natural Area Managers:

From June 28th to July 1st, Guyra Paraguay has undertaken the “Training Workshop for Natural Area Managers”. This important event, which took place in Asuncion, was supported by an institutional agreement, without precedents, signed with Secretaria del Ambiente (SEAM), Facultad de Ciencias Agrarias de la Universidad Nacional de Asuncion, Aves Argentinas y Guyra Paraguay.

Forty three persons attended this workshop, 33 men and 10 women. Also, it is important to note that 25 trainees were park guards from private and public reserves and the remaining 18 trainees

came from different departments of *Universidad Nacional de Asuncion*, *Secretaria del Ambiente*, local municipalities, and partners.

This three-day intensive training course was followed by a fourth day dedicated to a field visit to a model public protected area: Ybycui National Park, where various training activities took place.

All trainees received a back-pack with the following training materials: Manual for Environmental Education, Bird identification card, Water-bird identification guide, the book 102 Common Birds of Paraguay, Poster of Endangered Bird species, Book for Paraguayan Wildlife, a CD with bird-song recordings, CD with images for preparing boards, signs, etc.

2) Paraguay-Parana Waterway Strategic Workshop:

This workshop took place on July 26th, on the main Amphitheater of the Paraguayan Congress.

This event was co-organized by Guyra Paraguay, Secretaria del Ambiente (SEAM) and the Environmental Commission of the Paraguayan Congress.

Approximately 40 participants attended this workshop from different institutions: Paraguayan Congress, SEAM technicians and authorities, representatives from the Paraguayan External Affairs Ministry, the National Secretariat of Planning, Paraguayan Ministry of Public Work, partners and other local environmental organizations.

This was the first event of its kind. It was very useful for getting together stakeholders from different sectors that usually don't communicate and collaborate very well. Also, important technical and new project updates were provided to the participants. However, it is clear that follow-up activities should be undertaken in the future in order to address this complex international project.

3) Paraguayan Atlas of Bird Distribution:

Guyra Paraguay is prepared this material with important data and scientific information gathered in the last decade. It was launched for local and national stakeholders on April 24th 2006 in the main auditorium of ABC Color, the main media company in Paraguay. *See press article attached.*

With this material, Guyra Paraguay plans to provide the general public and in particular scientists, birdwatchers and nature lovers with a dynamic and practical atlas showing the range for each particular species in the Paraguayan territory.

4) Equipment for TNC office in Asuncion (TNC):

During this fiscal year, TNC has strengthened its capacity in Paraguay by purchasing a new desk-top computer, software and a laser printer, which will be very useful to support current and future activities in the country.

No departures from the work plan.

Objective 2: *Improve the management and technical capabilities of private sector and their effectiveness in working with biodiversity conservation activities.*

Activity 2.1) Institutional Development and Training for Conservancy Partners and Staff:

Institutional development and training for TNC partner staff is an integral part of the USAID GCP Cross Border project. To this end, TNC had supported partner participation in a variety of training events.

Anticipated Results/Outputs: (this Action will be a multi-year effort)

- Participation of 1 to 3 TNC partner staff in the CICOAM Management course to be offered in October 2005.
- Participation of DesdelChaco staff in GIS and/or Remote Sensing training.
- Participation of one partner staff member in the Natural Resources Management Course, to be undertaken in Denver, CO, and organized by Colorado University and TNC.
- TNC Staff and partner participation in other national and international conservation training events that may arise during the course of the FY. TNC will solicit USAID Paraguay approval before funding any of these training activities.

• **Participation of Wilfried Giesbrech in the " Reserva Valdiviana Launching Event":**

This event took place in Valdivia, Southern Chile in March of this year. Wilfried from Fundacion DesdelChaco is managing several similar projects in Paraguay, therefore, he attended this event in order to gain experience on this complex issue, make contacts and build a network of similar protected areas in the future.

Departures from the Work Plan: All training events for this activity were undertaken successfully as planned. The only output not undertaken was: - *Participation of 1 to 3 TNC partner staff in the CICOAM Management course to be offered in October 2005.* This activity was cancelled since this course was not offered this year. The funds were reallocated and approved by USAID for other activities. *See activity 1.7) Other Conservation Initiatives*

Activity 2.2) Participation in UNFCCC COP 10:

Anticipated Results/Outputs:

1. Participation of one Gurya's representative to the COP 10, to be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina.
2. Assistance of Guyra Paraguay in two side event presentations at the COP 10 in Buenos Aires.

The Climate Change specialist from Guyra Paraguay attended this event in Buenos Aires, Argentina and participated in two side event presentations at the COP 10.

During this fiscal year, Guyra Paraguay prepared the national framework for the evaluation of climate change mitigation projects, which was used by the National Technical Committee for evaluating MDL projects in Paraguay.

Guyra Paraguay has also undertaken several seminars and training courses for technicians, students and journalists in the implications of the Kyoto Protocol for the environment in Paraguay.

Lastly, Guyra Paraguay has prepared a proposal for environmental conservation in Paraguay according to the COP10 and has already made the contacts with *Secretaria del Ambiente* and the Ministry of External Affairs in order to promote this new tool for conservation.

No departures from the work plan.

Activity 2.3) Technical and Legal Support to “Secretaria del Ambiente del Paraguay”:

Anticipated Results/Outputs:

1. Part-time work of one IDEA lawyer dedicated to SEAM
2. Several meetings among IDEA, SEAM and INDERT officials
4. Technical support for other issues as required by SEAM.
5. At least two field trips to conflictive colonies managed by INDERT.

Upon SEAM's request, IDEA prepared an Environmental Law Evaluation for the Defensores del Chaco National Park which is facing legal property limits with some neighboring landowners and a military base.

Several technical meetings and field trips were undertaken with SEAM and other public institutions to remote areas in order to resolve conflicts among small farmers' colonies in important areas for environmental protection. IDEA served as a technical advisor and mediator among stakeholders. This has been a long process. Through this and other activities, SEAM is now strengthened and the critical situation with landless farmers has been mitigated. Also, the technical situation and political relationship with INDERT has now been improved, and several common-interest-activities are underway in order to further improve the environmental and social situation in rural colonies managed by INDERT.

No departures from the work plan.