Ecosystem Profiles

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) uses a process of developing "Ecosystem Profiles" to identify and articulate an investment strategy for each region to be funded. Each profile reflects a rapid assessment of biological priorities and the underlying causes of biodiversity loss within particular ecosystems. The profile couples these two elements with an inventory of conservation-related investment taking place within the region and other key information to identify how CEPF funding can provide the greatest incremental value.

The process of drafting an ecosystem profile begins after the CEPF Donor Council approves a region as a priority. Each profile follows a standard format that includes:

- Introduction
- Background
- Biological Importance of the Ecosystem
- Conservation Outcomes Defined for the Region of Interest
- Socioeconomic, Policy, and Civil Society Context of the Region
- Threat Assessment
- Assessment of Current Investment
- CEPF Niche for Investment
- CEPF Investment Strategy and Programmatic Focus
- Sustainability
- Conclusion
- Logical Framework

A more detailed description of the requirements for the ecosystem profile is provided below.

Each ecosystem profile is based on a comprehensive research and consultation process that includes input from diverse stakeholders to create a shared strategy from the outset. Technical review teams and regional representatives from CEPF donor partner institutions also have an opportunity to provide input before the profiles are submitted to the CEPF Donor Council for endorsement.

Regional Priorities
The CEPF Secretariat recommends specific biodiversity hotspots to become priorities for CEPF investment based on key factors, such as biological diversity, an area's political climate, leveraging opportunities and, where relevant, results of previous CEPF investment. A list of priorities is presented to the CEPF Donor Council for discussion and approval based on resources available.

Profiling Process and Methodology
The profiling begins with research and a participatory priority-setting process that seeks to include all key players in a region's biodiversity conservation activities. The purpose is

to secure broad-based scientific agreement on the biological priorities for conservation and then to define the CEPF niche and specific conservation targets and actions for the program's investments with diverse stakeholders.

Definition of the biological priorities is undertaken in consultation with the Center for Applied Biodiversity Science at Conservation International. These "Conservation Outcomes" represent the globally threatened species within the region, the sites that sustain them, and the landscapes necessary to maintain the ecological and evolutionary processes upon which those sites depend.

The approach includes engaging experts from numerous disciplines, as well as government agencies; nongovernmental organizations; key communities, including indigenous groups within the focal biodiversity areas; donor organizations; and other stakeholders in agreeing the subset of conservation outcomes for which CEPF funding could have the greatest impact.

The profiling process may also capitalize on priority-setting processes that have already taken place in a region.

The profiling team will also secure and analyze up-to-date information on current activities and threats affecting biodiversity conservation in a region, as well as current levels of investment and other data to inform identification of the CEPF niche and the investment strategy. This data-gathering process also includes consultation with many stakeholders.

The profile is drafted from this analysis and the results of the participatory process. The final draft includes a Logical Framework that outlines the CEPF objectives (known as "strategic directions") and specific investment priorities developed for the region, as well as broad indicators to measure impact.

Reviews

The CEPF Secretariat will undertake a review process with the stakeholders and may also solicit reviews from others in the region to assess the technical and programmatic merits of the ecosystem profile.

In addition to the above review processes, each ecosystem profile is shared with the CEPF Working Group for review and with other technical counterparts of these donor institutions, as relevant.

Once the draft document is finalized, each profile is then submitted to the CEPF Donor Council for approval. Each profile must be submitted 45 days prior to the Donor Council meeting at which it will be considered for approval. Comments from the review are discussed and responded to, and any necessary changes are made. Each profile must also be endorsed by the relevant GEF focal points before disbursement of funds can begin.

Implementation of the Ecosystem Profile
Funding for each region is approved by the Donor Council in the form of a block ecosystem grant. The ecosystem profile is then made public on the CEPF Web site, www.cepf.net, and implementation can begin.

Applications are accepted through an approved application process. The regional implementation team will coordinate any required independent reviews of hotspot-specific proposals. The CEPF Secretariat will coordinate review by the relevant regional implementation team and, as needed, independent experts, of applications proposing activities designed to benefit multiple hotspots. Successful applications must help implement a specific strategic direction represented in the profile and also meet other approved eligibility criteria.

Information Requirements for Ecosystem Profiles*

Each Ecosystem Profile shall include the following information, in such an order and with such emphasis as may be necessary within each ecosystem:

1. Description of the biodiversity hotspot and the ecosystem or ecosystems proposed to be funded by the CEPF, including its size, location, climate, threatened species and habitats, geography, indigenous peoples and other characteristics, as relevant, and it shall explain the importance of the biodiversity housed in the area, and why the ecosystem has priority.

2. Information confirming the eligibility of the area for funding by CEPF.

3. Information related to the conservation targets that have been defined for the region. These outcomes represent the quantifiable set of species and land areas that are indispensable to conserving biodiversity. Priority areas necessary to maintain ecological and evolutionary processes at the landscape scale will also be identified.

4. Analysis of the socioeconomic, policy, and civil society context of the area to assist in developing a comprehensive understanding of development priorities (including poverty reduction impacts), threats, and opportunities.

5. Assessment of the threats and root causes of these threats, to the ecosystem's integrity, including, as relevant, a brief historic overview thereof. Description of the kind of solutions that can be designed to overcome or at least mitigate the root causes of these threats.

6. Identification of the primary actors involved and how these should change to support biodiversity conservation in the area (both threat actors and opportunity actors).

7. Description of major efforts that have been or are being undertaken for biodiversity conservation in the area by national and international, bilateral, public and private sector actors, as relevant, including levels of funding already provided by those actors, and why existing activities and investments are deemed to be insufficient, or ineffective to provide for biodiversity conservation in the area.

8. Strategy for biodiversity conservation in the ecosystem and its region; such strategy to be based on existing information and known priorities, or a new synthesis, as appropriate.

9. Description of external conditions considered necessary for biodiversity conservation in the ecosystem including political, legal, social, economic, cultural and biological elements, as appropriate.

10. Description of the legal status of the area concerned, and of state and federal or other agencies responsible for the establishment and management of protected areas.

11. Identification of gaps or niches in which the CEPF could particularly add value or complement existing investments in biodiversity conversation.

12. Recommendation for priorities for funding from the CEPF, taking into account the strategy for biodiversity conservation in the ecosystem and its region.

13. Identification of stakeholders who may be able to work in alliances to more effectively combat threats to the ecosystem's integrity or to increase the overall effectiveness of existing conservation activities, and a description of intended approaches for their involvement and for involvement of the local population. Such a description shall also address means of raising awareness of the general public, as appropriate.

12. Motivated recommendation of the types of activities for which grant funding would be provided under the Ecosystem Profile and a classification of these types of activities based on their anticipated size of the grant funding involved.

13. Description of types of entities that are expected to be recipients of grants.

14. A logical framework with broad indicators that can be used to evaluate and determine whether or not the strategic funding directions put forward through the Ecosystem Profile have been successful.

16. Conclusions

** These Information Requirements are extracted from Schedule II of the CEPF Financing Agreement.*