Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund

Seventeenth Meeting of the Donor Council Conservation International 2011 Crystal Drive, Arlington, VA 23 April 2010 8 a.m. - 11 a.m. EDT

Presentation of findings from the evaluation of CEPF impact

Recommended Action Item:

The Donor Council is asked to **review** the findings of the evaluation of CEPF impact, which will be provided in a presentation by the consultant who undertook the study and will also be detailed in a formal written report to be distributed to the Council in mid-April 2010 after Working Group review.

Background:

At its Fifteenth Meeting on 9 September 2009, the Donor Council agreed to support a streamlined evaluation of CEPF impact in conjunction with the program's tenth anniversary, emphasizing the benefits for communications at this time. In follow-up, the Secretariat developed the terms of reference and methodology for the evaluation in consultation with Working Group members and submitted this to the Donor Council for no-objection approval in December 2009. The Terms of Reference, incorporating the methodology and a timeline, were approved by the Council on 15 December 2009. The full Terms of Reference are attached.

In keeping with the methodology and timeline agreed, the Acting Executive Director appointed an independent consultant, David M. Olson, in consultation with the Working Group to undertake the evaluation. Mr. Olson's appointment followed suggestions of potential consultants by Working Group members, the Secretariat's invitation to each of those consultants to express their interest and to submit a cover letter and CV, and then a final selection in consultation with the Working Group.

As scheduled, the evaluation began in early January 2010 and included development of a more detailed work plan as a first step. This work plan, also attached, was developed by the consultant, discussed in a meeting of the Working Group in January 2010 and refined based on the discussion.

The evaluation will formally conclude in April 2010 with presentations by Mr. Olson of his findings to the Working Group and Donor Council based on a report expected in March 2010. The report will be distributed to the Donor Council following Working Group review, scheduled to take place in a meeting on 9 April 2010.

Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund

<u>Terms of Reference:</u> Evaluation of Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund Impact

16 December 2009

Background:

The year 2010 will mark the 10-year anniversary of the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF). Launched in August 2000, CEPF has become a global program enabling more than 1,500 nongovernmental and private sector organizations to help protect vital ecosystems.

Designated as the International Year for Biological Diversity, 2010 also marks the target for the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to achieve a "significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss." This target was subsequently endorsed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the U.N. General Assembly and was incorporated as a new target under the Millennium Development Goals. The tenth CBD meeting will be hosted by the government of Japan, a CEPF partner, in October of this milestone year.

During the Fifteenth Meeting of the Donor Council held in September 2009, the Council asked that an evaluation of CEPF be undertaken as a tool to demonstrate the program's impact, particularly as part of planning for the tenth anniversary. The Donor Council requested a rapid, streamlined evaluation by the partnership and emphasized the benefits for communications at this time. This document sets out the Terms of Reference for this evaluation developed in consultation with members of the Working Group and approved by the Donor Council on 15 December 2009.

Scope:

The evaluation will be undertaken as a global review to identify the program's impact since its first year of grant-making in 2001. The emphasis will be on the program as a whole, rather than on the effectiveness of individual field programs or components. However, the review will include analysis and reporting of specific examples and case studies from regional portfolios to demonstrate impact. Results will be demonstrated through both qualitative and quantitative reporting and analysis.

The assessment will build on the 2006 independent evaluation of the global program¹ to provide additional information across the program's full 10 years, including a focus on the CEPF niche and impact in relation to the following overarching components in the program's Strategic Framework (FY 2008-2012)²:

- Strengthening protection and management of globally significant biodiversity.
- Increasing local and national capacity to integrate biodiversity conservation into development and landscape planning.

As appropriate, the evaluation will also include analysis of the two cross-cutting components from the Strategic Framework as these pertain to specific impact:

- Effective monitoring and knowledge sharing.
- Ecosystem profile development and program execution.

¹ Report of the Independent Evaluation of the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, January 2006, www.cepf.net/Documents/cepfevaluationreport_andmanagementresponse.pdf

² Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund Strategic Framework, FY 2008-2012, July 2007 www.cepf.net/Documents/cepfstrategicframework fy08 12.pdf

While the above components were specifically agreed only for the program's current Strategic Framework, the components were strategically designed based on the results from the program's first phase. Therefore, analysis may be undertaken across the program's funding phases and its entire portfolio based on these components. These components also include diverse approaches for rich analysis and documentation detailed more fully under Objectives.

As the guiding strategies for portfolio-level implementation, the CEPF Ecosystem Profiles shall also be considered, as appropriate. The strategies set out explicit approaches and targets that contribute to the global goals but may also have components unique to the specific region.

Process & Methodology:

A Consultant will be appointed by the Executive Director in consultation with the Working Group. The Consultant shall have expertise in the field of nature conservation, institutional capacity building and community or social service expertise and will have proven expertise in M&E methodologies and processes, with demonstrated experience in conducting external evaluations of complex programs. A contract will be provided to the Consultant covering all expenses, such as daily rates, travel and communication costs. Payment will be 2/3 up front and 1/3 upon submission of the Consultant's report.

The methodology will include:

- Review of internal and external CEPF documents, including ecosystem profiles, consolidation plans and Strategic Framework (FY 2008-2012); monitoring and evaluation documents, such as five-year portfolio assessments completed for 14 regions to date, regular donor reporting and reports from previous independent and partner evaluations and selected final reports compiled by project leaders detailing results and lessons learned, as well as other materials produced by grant recipients particularly focused on monitoring and evaluation. Access to field reports and Aide Memoires of the World Bank shall also be made available.
- <u>Consultations</u> will be held with the Management Team, selected coordination and regional implementation teams, external grant recipients and partners and members of the Working Group.
- <u>Field visits</u> to 2-3 regions will be undertaken to develop selected case studies and to provide first-hand knowledge and verification of impact.
- A <u>draft report</u> will be submitted to the CEPF Executive Director and Working Group, accompanied by a debriefing.

CEPF donor partner and staff representatives may accompany the Consultant on field visits as part of the assessment or participate in other ways to be determined.

Deliverables:

The Consultant will produce a 25-50 page document with an assessment of CEPF impact in fulfilling its purpose to provide strategic assistance to nongovernmental and private sector organizations for the protection of vital ecosystems. This shall include an assessment of the degree to which CEPF fulfills its niche, as well as the program's impact toward its strategic objectives of 1) strengthening protection and management of globally significant biodiversity and

2) increasing local and national capacity to integrate biodiversity conservation into development and landscape planning. The report will also provide an assessment of how the impact contributes to the CBD 2010 goal.

Provisional Timeline:

November 2009	Terms of Reference drafted					
1 December 2009	Terms of Reference submitted to Donor Council for review an no-objection approval					
	Working Group members invited to submit names of candidate consultants					
10 December 2009	Deadline for Working Group members to submit candidate consultants					
15 December 2009	Deadline for no-objection approval by Donor Council					
18 December 2009	Executive Director selects consultant in consultation with Working Group					
4 January – 17 March 2010	Evaluation, with first step to be development of a work plan with a more detailed methodology to be presented to Executive Director and Working Group					
24 March 2010	Submission of draft evaluation report to Executive Director and Working Group					
11 April 2010	Debriefing and presentation of draft report to Working Group					
24 April 2010	Presentation of final report to the Donor Council					

Objectives:

The Consultant shall assess CEPF impact in fulfilling its purpose to provide strategic assistance to nongovernmental and private sector organizations for the protection of vital ecosystems.

This shall include an assessment of the degree to which CEPF fulfills its niche, as well as the objectives outlined below from the Strategic Framework, among others.

1. Strengthening protection and management of globally significant biodiversity

This could include assessing CEFF impact in the following areas:

- Catalyzing improved management and expansion of existing protected areas, as well as the creation of new protected areas.
- Assisting communities, including indigenous groups, and other partners in managing biologically rich land as well as landscapes that buffer key biodiversity and protected areas as well as support community stewardship of biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- Supporting the introduction and use of conservation financing tools such as payments for environmental services and economic incentives for conservation.

2. Increasing local and national capacity to integrate biodiversity conservation into development and landscape planning

This could include assessing CEPF impact in the following areas:

- Enabling civil society groups to plan, implement and influence biodiversity conservation efforts as effective partners in sustainable development. Examples could include development of communal, municipal or regional land-use plans, plans for local economic development, certification for more sustainable management and private agreements.
- Assisting in improved land-use planning and activities that mainstream conservation, including collaboration with the private sector; promoting supportive policy and legislative frameworks; and promoting more sustainable resource management linked to livelihoods.
- Promoting collaboration with governmental partners and sectors such as mining, agriculture, logging and tourism by fostering innovative public-private partnerships and multi-stakeholder alliances to harmonize conservation with economic development.

Impact in relation to the program's investment strategies detailed in the region-specific Ecosystem Profiles may also be a focus.

Based on the findings, the Consultant shall also provide an assessment of how CEPF has contributed to the CBD goal to achieve "a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss" and specifically the 2010 target.

Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund

Evaluation of Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund Impact: Methodology & Work Plan

21 January 2010 Prepared by David Olson, Conservation Earth

Background

The year 2010 will mark the 10-year anniversary of the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF). Launched in August 2000, CEPF has become a global program enabling more than 1,500 nongovernmental and private sector organizations to help protect vital ecosystems.

Designated as the International Year for Biological Diversity, 2010 also marks the target for the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to achieve a "significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss." This target was subsequently endorsed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the U.N. General Assembly and was incorporated as a new target under the Millennium Development Goals. The tenth CBD meeting will be hosted by the government of Japan, a CEPF partner, in October of this milestone year.

During the Fifteenth Meeting of the Donor Council held in September 2009, the Council asked that an evaluation of CEPF be undertaken as a tool to demonstrate the program's impact, particularly as part of planning for the tenth anniversary. The Donor Council requested a rapid, streamlined evaluation by the partnership and emphasized the benefits for communications at this time. This document sets out a proposed Work Plan and methodology for this evaluation.

Scope

The evaluation will be undertaken as a global review to identify the program's impact since its first year of grant-making in 2001. The emphasis will be on the program as a whole, rather than on the effectiveness of individual field programs or components. However, the review will include analysis and reporting of specific examples and case studies from regional portfolios to demonstrate impact. Results will be demonstrated through both qualitative and quantitative reporting and analysis.

The assessment will build on the 2006 independent evaluation of the global program³ to provide additional information across the program's full 10 years, including a focus on the CEPF niche and impact in relation to the following overarching components in the program's Strategic Framework (FY 2008-2012)⁴:

- Strengthening protection and management of globally significant biodiversity.
- Increasing local and national capacity to integrate biodiversity conservation into development and landscape planning.

³ Report of the Independent Evaluation of the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, January 2006, www.cepf.net/Documents/cepfevaluationreport andmanagementresponse.pdf

⁴ Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund Strategic Framework, FY 2008-2012, July 2007 www.cepf.net/Documents/cepfstrategicframework fy08 12.pdf

As appropriate, the evaluation will also include analysis of the two cross-cutting components from the Strategic Framework as these pertain to specific impact:

- Effective monitoring and knowledge sharing.
- Ecosystem profile development and program execution.

While the above components were specifically agreed only for the program's current Strategic Framework, the components were strategically designed based on the results from the program's first phase. Therefore, analysis may be undertaken across the program's funding phases and its entire portfolio based on these components. These components also include diverse approaches for rich analysis and documentation detailed more fully under Objectives.

As the guiding strategies for portfolio-level implementation, the CEPF Ecosystem Profiles shall also be considered, as appropriate. The strategies set out explicit approaches and targets that contribute to the global goals but may also have components unique to the specific region.

Methodology

The methodology will include the following steps:

- **Finalization** of the Work Plan & Methodology. This proposed Work Plan will be submitted for review to the Working Group in week 2, followed by a discussion with the evaluator and finalization. Weeks 1-2.
- Review of internal and external CEPF documents, including ecosystem profiles for regions where CEPF has been active and plans to initiate a program in the near future, consolidation plans and Strategic Framework (FY 2008-2012); monitoring and evaluation documents, such as five-year portfolio assessments completed for 14 regions to date, regular donor reporting and reports from previous independent and partner evaluations and selected final reports compiled by project leaders detailing results and lessons learned, as well as other materials produced by grant recipients particularly focused on monitoring and evaluation. Access to field reports and Aide Memoires of the World Bank shall also be made available, as well as other relevant documents. Weeks 1-9.
- Consultations will be held with the Management Team (the Management Team has already provided detailed presentations CEPF for region), selected coordination and regional implementation teams, external grant recipients and partners and members of the Working Group, and selected international and regional conservation specialists (for example, conservation professionals from Conservation International, IUCN, BirdLife International, Species Survival Commission, WWF, The Nature Conservancy, GEF, The World Bank, Wildlife Conservation Society). Consultations with external specialists will focus on questions relating to the overall impact of CEPF globally and regionally. Specialists with broad geographic experience (global or intra-regional), extensive knowledge of conservation issues and activities, and a long-term (decadal) perspective will be emphasized. Weeks 3-11.
- **Field visits** to 2 regions will be undertaken to develop selected case studies and to provide first-hand knowledge and verification of impact. The field visits are also deemed to be useful as they provide opportunities to understand regional perspectives from grantees and other local conservation practitioners that otherwise may be challenging to

glean from documents or other consultations. Individuals and organizations who are familiar with regional conservation strategies, drivers of change, and the dynamics and evolution of the regional conservation community will be sought for interviews, as well as other representatives from government, Civil Society, and the private sector who have been associated with or peripheral to CEPF within the region. Two field visits were decided upon as a single visit might not provide insights into the impact of CEPF across regions with different conditions (that is, different biomes and continents, enabling conditions, configuration of the conservation community, etc.), and three visits is untenable given limitations of time and resources. Three primary criteria were used to select the regions to be visited:

- o First, the regions should be logistically accessible in terms of travel time and ability to conduct consultations.
- Second, the CEPF programs needed to have been largely completed with some period of time after the program was finished to assess momentum (active consolidation programs were acceptable).
- O Third, it was felt to be most informative if the evaluator visited two regions that initially shared low Civil Society involvement (that is, when CEPF started). Visits to regions which initially had very low levels of (1) on-the-ground conservation and (2) Civil Society involvement would have been informative within the context of one of CEPF's potential roles as a catalyst. Southwest China and West Africa are two examples, but adequate visits to these regions within the timeframe of the evaluation would have been challenging.

Southern Mesoamerica and the Succulent Karoo are recommended as the two regions for field visits. Weeks 4-7.

• A **draft report** will be submitted to the CEPF Executive Director and Working Group, accompanied by a debriefing. Weeks 12-16.

CEPF donor partner and staff representatives may accompany the Consultant on field visits as part of the assessment or participate in other ways to be determined.

Deliverables

The Consultant will produce a 25-50 page document with an assessment of CEPF,s impact in fulfilling its purpose to provide strategic assistance to nongovernmental and private sector organizations for the protection of vital ecosystems. This will include an assessment of the contribution of CEPF towards achieving the goals of the global conservation agenda, the degree to which CEPF fulfills its defined niche, as well as the program's impact toward its strategic objectives of 1) strengthening protection and management of globally significant biodiversity and 2) increasing local and national capacity to integrate biodiversity conservation into development and landscape planning. The report will also provide an assessment of how the impact contributes to the CBD 2010 goal.

Objectives

The overall goal is to assess CEPF's impact in fulfilling its purpose in providing strategic assistance to nongovernmental and private sector organizations for the protection of vital ecosystems.

This includes the following objectives:

I. Global Impact. An assessment of the 10-year, program-level contribution of CEPF towards achieving goals of the global conservation agenda, particularly in areas of:

Representation – Has CEPF provided conservation attention to distinct ecoregions/Hotspots where conservation was needed and to a set of regions that complement actions elsewhere in the world such that global representation has been improved?

Sustaining key ecological processes – Have CEPF activities, investments, and innovations resulted in outcomes that have secured or improved key ecoregional- (Hotspot-level), regional-scale (larger swaths of continents), or global-scale (for example, migrations of birds) ecological processes?

Maintaining viable populations of species and averting extinction – Has CEPF helped stabilize or improve the status of threatened species/taxa within investment regions, and put the populations of target species on a trajectory towards long-term viability? How does the suite of species targeted by CEPF correspond to global species conservation priorities as established by the IUCN/SSC and other organizations?

Ecosystem resilience to disturbance and long-term change – Can one measure if CEPF activities and investments have contributed towards improving the resilience of target ecosystems to disturbance, climate change, and others drivers of change?

Drivers of Change – Have the actions of CEPF, taken together, helped to diminish the negative impacts of globally-significant Drivers of Change (DOC)?

Strengthening our own species' 1) capacity and 2) on-the-ground commitment to conservation – How has the overall CEPF program contributed to our own species' collective conservation capacity and fostered a favorable environment for effective conservation?

II. Region or Hotspot Impact. Investing sizable amounts of conservation funds in a region typically results in positive outcomes on-the-ground or in creating a more favorable environment for success. One can measure this by assessing the direct impact (positive or negative) of CEPF in terms of the specific objectives outlined in the Strategic Framework through regional evaluations, consultations, field visits, and project reports (see *IV. Strategic Framework Objectives* below).

A broader, but equally important question, is whether the application of a CEPF program (defined by its scale of investment, approach, types of investment and activities) to any given region/Hotspot will have a significant role in helping achieve a vision for conservation success there. This vision can be defined within an Ecosystem Profile, NBSAP, or other robust, science-based strategy. Larger blocks of natural habitat (for example, KBAs), the degree of representation of distinct communities, the degree of linkages (for example, corridors) and fragmentation, the status of key processes (including ecosystem services) and target species, and the impact of key Drivers of Change (threats) are examples of biodiversity features to be evaluated within the

context of a strategy. In addition to biological and ecological goals, guidelines exist for what constitutes an effective configuration of the conservation community and an enabling environment. Metrics for these include the presence of conservation practitioners and the skills they have, the breadth of issues they are able to address, the range of geographies within the region where they may have influence, the sustainability of funding, the availability of tools for effective conservation (for example, accessible spatial data and analyses, information networks), and enabling conditions (for example, the political and legislative climate, communication networks, strength of partnerships and collaborations). Fortunately, there are several sophisticated tools available that help to measure Civil Society capacity, PA management, etc. The sustainability of both biological and conservation capacity gains will be examined, as well.

Does the application of a CEPF program help to improve the condition and trajectory of conservation for the entire region, rather than just for sites, species, and issues where CEPF activities have been directly targeted? A logical approach to examine this question is to follow the status of various biological and conservation community/environment parameters (see above) over time, measured at the initiation of CEPF program (available within Ecosystem Profiles), at the end of the CEPF program, and a point several years after the end of the CEPF investment period to assess momentum and sustainability. One can then compare these patterns to those of Hotspots that have not yet benefitted from an active CEPF program. For non-CEPF Hotspots, ecosystem profiles that are in the process of development or other available strategies would provide a vision and benchmarks. The relative influence of biome, geographic location, degree of threat, conservation scenario (that is, capacity and enabling environment), and scale of investment on CEPF efficacy can, in theory, be examined. Such an analysis is challenging due to limits on available information, potentially confounding factors, and complex and diverse situations around the world, but an effort should be made, as best one can, to see if 'CEPF-type' investments are making a significant (this must be well-defined in advance) difference to conservation within priority regions, and whether it is transformational ('game-changing') to incremental. One must also consider that incremental impacts may be significant if (a) the situation in a region precludes investments from being absorbed or catalyzing major advances, (b) CEPF has stabilized loss and degradation, or (c) CEPF has 'set the stage' for major improvements over time.

III. CEPF Niche. The evaluation should assess the degree to which CEPF has fulfilled its original and evolving niche. An underlying hypothesis is that strengthening and empowering Civil Society's engagement in biodiversity conservation will help slow and stop the loss of biodiversity within extinction 'crisis' Hotspots.

An emerging question is: How much "strengthening' and 'empowering' of Civil Society is sufficient to achieve 'significant' conservation outcomes by the end of each CEPF program and over time? The Ecosystem Profiles provide a vision of what a region should look and function like biologically if conservation efforts are successful. Similarly, a vision of what constitutes a minimal configuration for a 'strengthened' and 'empowered' Civil Society would be helpful to define the CEPF niche and the kind of activities and investments best suited to the varying conservation scenarios of different regions. For example, has the niche of CEPF been to set improvements in motion and/or to attain minimum thresholds for the conformation of Civil Society within the broader conservation community. Initial discussions with CEPF staff and conservation practitioners suggest that the original niche of 'conservation through the actions of Civil Society' has been maintained, but there has been an increasing focus on particularly efficacious actions and investments within that broad mission. Given that the global CEPF program has worked in multiple regions and a has a decade of activity, this 10-year evaluation provides a rare opportunity to examine how a global conservation program of scale is best targeted to achieve real and sustainable gains.

IV. Specific Objectives. The evaluation, through review of CEPF region evaluations and reports, project reports, and consultations, provides an opportunity to assess the degree to which CEPF has made progress towards achieving stated objectives, such as those outlined in Ecosystem Profiles and the 2007 Strategic Framework:

1. Strengthening protection and management of globally significant biodiversity

- Catalyzing improved management and expansion of existing protected areas, as well as the creation of new protected areas.
- Assisting communities, including indigenous groups, and other partners in managing biologically rich land as well as landscapes that buffer key biodiversity and protected areas as well as support community stewardship of biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- Supporting the introduction and use of conservation financing tools such as payments for environmental services and economic incentives for conservation.
- An assessment of how CEPF has contributed to the CBD goal to achieve "a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss" and specifically the 2010 target.

2. Increasing local and national capacity to integrate biodiversity conservation into development and landscape planning

- Enabling civil society groups to plan, implement and influence biodiversity conservation efforts as effective partners in sustainable development. Examples could include development of communal, municipal or regional land-use plans, plans for local economic development, certification for more sustainable management and private agreements.
- Assisting in improved land-use planning and activities that mainstream conservation, including collaboration with the private sector; promoting supportive policy and legislative frameworks; and promoting more sustainable resource management linked to livelihoods.
- Promoting collaboration with governmental partners and sectors such as mining, agriculture, logging and tourism by fostering innovative public-private partnerships and multi-stakeholder alliances to harmonize conservation with economic development.

A detailed and specific examination of the achievements of individual programs within the context of stated objectives is important. One should also conduct a relative comparison of what has been achieved within each region using a set of standardized metrics, and examine if certain shared features or differences are correlated to different patterns of success.

V. Lessons Learned & Best Practices. Each of the analyses described above provide opportunities for learning what works well and what does not under different conservation scenarios and scales. From these, best practices can be derived for future global programs, regional programs, and projects.

VI. The Future for CEPF. A global conservation program of this scale, scope, and duration is unique. CEPF may prove to be an effective and established mechanism to achieve immediate and meaningful conservation over this next critical decade. Expanding to new Hotspots, revisiting Hotspots, or applying CEPF-style programs to other areas, such as wilderness areas, freshwater or marine ecoregions, or non-Hotspot biomes could play a critical role in stemming the extinction crisis. The 10-year evaluation may shed light on the potential role of CEPF in the future.

Work Plan

10-Year Evaluation of CEPF Impact: Proposed Work Plan

	Work Plan Week (January 4 – April 24, 2010)															
Activity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Work Plan & methodology finalized																
Review of documents & consultation																
CEPF Hotspot Region field visits (2-3)																
Synthesis, analysis, report writing																
Submission of draft report												March 24				
Debriefing & presentation of final report to Exec Director & Working Group															April 11	
Presentation of the final report to the Donor Council																April 24

Provisional Timeline

4 January – 17 March Evaluation, with first step to be development of a work plan

with a more detailed methodology to be presented to Executive

Director and Working Group

1-25 February 2010 Field visits to two CEPF Regions: Southern Mesoamerica &

Succulent Karoo

24 March 2010 Submission of draft evaluation report to Executive Director and

Working Group

11 April 2010 Debriefing and presentation of draft report to Working Group

24 April 2010 Presentation of final report to the Donor Council

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