

An Overview of CEPF's Portfolio in the Chocó-Darién-Western Ecuador Hotspot: Chocó-Manabí Conservation Corridor

The Chocó-Manabí Conservation Corridor falls within the Chocó-Darién-Western Ecuador Hotspot, an area that stretches from southeastern Panamá, along the Pacific coast of Colombia and Ecuador, as far as the northwestern corner of Perú. Within this hotspot, the Chocó-Manabí Corridor spans more than 60,000 square kilometers. In Colombia, the corridor encompasses a full range of Chocó and Andean ecosystems as it extends from the peaks of Colombia's western Andean cordillera down to the Pacific Ocean. In Ecuador, the corridor includes numerous life zones in the Cotacachi-Cayapas Ecological Reserve and Mache-Chindul Ecological Reserve. Cotacachi-Cayapas, located in the western foothills of the Ecuadorian Andes, covers about 204,000 hectares of coastal and sierra zones, ranging in elevation from 100 to 4,400 meters.

This region is globally recognized as one of the world's most biologically and culturally diverse. It provides habitat to an extraordinary wealth of plant and animal species and has an extremely high degree of endemism — by some estimates, one of the highest in the world. In addition, it is home to a diverse range of more than 250 distinct ethnic groups, including African descendants, indigenous and mestizo communities. Because of this, much of the CEPF emphasis in this region is working with the various ethnic groups living in and around the protected areas of the Corridor to find ways of better protecting biodiversity while also helping to improve livelihoods.

The CEPF investment strategy is to support effective participation by civil society in the conservation of biodiversity within the Chocó-Manabí Corridor — seeking to empower historically marginalized Afro-Colombian, Afro-Ecuadorian, and indigenous communities regarding conservation and sound natural resource management in their home lands; to improve the management of existing protected areas; to create connectivity between protected areas; and to leverage other investments in the region through a more coordinated approach to development plans.

The ecosystem profile established three strategic directions for CEPF's grant making in this region:

- 1. Establish/strengthen local and regional mechanisms to foster corridor-level conservation.*

This strategic direction focuses on civil society efforts to influence policy-makers to incorporate biodiversity conservation more fully into their development plans, investments, legislation and policies. It also allows for building both regional stakeholder networks and an elevated awareness of the connection between nature conservation and sustainable development at local, regional and national levels.

2. *Bring selected protected areas and species under improved management.*
Here CEPF seeks proposals specifically to stimulate improved planning and management of protected areas. This includes the development of formal management plans, biodiversity inventories and surveys, and building the capacity of individuals and institutions responsible for the management of protected areas.

3. *Identify and develop sustainable development practices in communities near selected protected areas*
Here CEPF specifically targets the distinct ethnic groups, including African descendants, indigenous and mestizo communities. The focus is on supporting projects that will help introduce new techniques for natural resource use among these communities. Projects targeting coffee, cacao, shrimp farming, ecotourism, carbon sequestration and a range of non-timber forest products are all possibilities under this strategic direction.

Coordinating CEPF Grantmaking on the Ground

The Coordination Unit for the Chocó-Manabí Conservation Corridor is composed of members of the Conservation International offices in both Colombia and Ecuador. Their job is to provide close and continuous support to applicants and grantees. They review all proposals and contribute to project design and monitoring to ensure a network of strategically oriented, cohesive projects. Coordination Unit staff work at the country and bi-national scale to project the CEPF strategy, fostering partnerships among key stakeholders and establishing connections between NGOs and community groups to build greater grassroots capacity. This has been achieved principally through dialogues with municipal and national government authorities, as well as indigenous and African descendant community organizations, helping these decision-makers to include biodiversity conservation in their local development agendas. Regional meetings have also been convened to promote dissemination of information about management plans and conservation tools, particularly along the border between Colombia and Ecuador. The coordination Unit also seeks to secure complementary funds to CEPF investment in the Corridor to support a strong civil society base for biodiversity conservation that can thrive long after initial CEPF funds have been fully committed.

The CEPF Approach to Grant-making: Ventanas

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) began funding for this hotspot in early 2002 with a \$5 million initial investment strategy to be implemented over 5 years. The strategy emphasizes priority areas within the Chocó-Manabí Corridor where many opportunities exist to develop local and regional mechanisms to foster corridor-level conservation efforts among many stakeholders, improve the management of protected areas, and promote sustainable development practices in communities located near protected areas.

Given the expanse of the Chocó-Manabí Corridor, and the limited amount of funding available, CEPF conducted a further ranking of funding targets in order to give our grants an even sharper focus. This refinement of our investment niche was developed around four criteria:

- **Biology:** Areas within the corridor were selected based on location of natural vegetation remnants that could provide opportunities for increased connectivity, especially in areas identified as priority sites for species and habitat conservation.
- **Protected Areas:** Focus was given to the consolidation and protection of established Natural Parks, Ecological Reserves, Wildlife Refuges, as well as Civil Society Nature Reserves managed by indigenous and African descendent communities.
- **Geography:** An additional analysis of the watersheds within the Corridor was conducted to ensure that the impacts of drainage systems were included in the priority area definition process.
- **Management:** A census of public and private management initiatives in the corridor was conducted to assess in particular the capacity of the NGO sector in the Corridor to determine which areas had the greatest need.

The result of this process was the definition of four priority areas within the corridor, which we refer to as “Ventanas,” or windows. These priority areas were defined as the Bocas de San Juan Ventana in Colombia, the Bi-National Ventana covering a large area along the border between Colombia and Ecuador, and the Mache-Chindul Ecological Reserve and Machililla National Park Ventanas in Ecuador. These have been determined as the core building blocks through which to successfully support a corridor approach in this region.

To date CEPF has committed almost \$3.6 million in support of 28 projects that contribute to all three strategic directions in all four Ventanas (Charts 1 and 2, all charts are provided at the end of the overview). The full picture of the portfolio to date is presented in Chart 3 and the timeline of grant commitments is illustrated in Chart 4.

For each of these Ventanas, a set of 5 and 10-year conservation outcomes was developed which support and further refine the focus of the CEPF strategic directions and help guide CEPF in our project selection. The outcomes designated for the corridor provide additional guidance on priority areas for protection, consolidation, and connectivity within each of the Ventanas. The 5 and 10-year outcomes for Chocó-Manabí provide a tool for monitoring and measuring the impact of the CEPF investment, and are a framework for collaborative implementation with our partners on the ground. As part of this process, three maps were produced to help monitor and visualize the current and future state of the Corridor. These maps include the current state of the Corridor, and 5-year and 10-year vision maps provided at the end of this summary document.

Bocas de San Juan Ventana (Colombia)

The Bocas de San Juan Ventana consists of the northern-most portion of the Corridor, forming a triangle that includes Tatamá and Utría National Parks, their buffer zones, Serranía de los Paraguas and the watershed of the San Juan River. Within this window, there is great opportunity to create connectivity between Tatamá and Serranía de los Paraguas by creating a micro-corridor through the Valle del Cauca region.

The set of 5- and 10-year outcomes developed for the Bocas de San Juan Ventana is as follows:

5-year Outcomes: San Juan Ventana
Increase the size of the Natural Reserve of Cerro el Inglés
Strengthen the Network of Natural Reserves for Serranía de los Paraguas
Improved management and protection of species in the Southern Buffer Zone of Utría / Golfo de Tribugá National Park
Improved management and protection of species in the Northern Buffer Zone of Utría / El Valle National Park
Establish Connectivity between Tatamá National Park & Serranía de los Paraguas Private Reserve
Implementation of Management Plans for the Territorios Colectivos Negros in the improvement zone of the Network of Natural Reserves of Serranía de los Paraguas
10-year Outcomes: San Juan Ventana
Improved management of the Private Nature Reserves of Serranía de los Paraguas
Management plans implemented and species protected in the southern and northern portions of the Buffer Zone of Utría / Golfo de Tribugá National Park
Connectivity established between Tatamá National Park and Serranía de los Paraguas Private Reserve
Connectivity established in Territorios Colectivos Negros and Resguardos Indígenas in the Mid and Lower San Juan

Connectivity in this area is of increasing importance, as the landscape is rapidly becoming a mosaic of fragmented forest blocks where traditional shade-grown coffee producers are changing practices to cattle grazing. As a result, working with coffee farmers is one targeted approach in this region, and CEPF has invested a total of \$526,450 in a partnership that includes Conservation International, the Comité Departamental de Cafeteros del Valle del Cauca of the Colombian Coffee Federation and the Corporación Autónoma Regional del Valle del Cauca (CVC). This partnership is working to improve current coffee farming practices among more than 1,000 coffee farmers to help create better connectivity between Tatamá National Park and Serranía de los Paraguas Private Reserve, while also helping to ensure a steady demand for coffee cultivated through conservation practices.

Another key focus within the Bocas de San Juan Ventana is the provision of capacity to those managing the protected areas within this priority site. Corporación Serraniagua is currently implementing a grant to establish a network of private reserves in the Tatamá-Paraguas Conservation Corridor by preparing needs assessments and management plans for 12 private reserves. This project focuses on developing connectivity in the region as well as the improvement of overall management practices.

Bi-National Ventana (Colombia and Ecuador)

The Bi-National Ventana is the largest of the four CEPF priority areas, encompassing the frontier region between Colombia and Ecuador that falls within the Hotspot. In Colombia, the Ventana starts in the Sanquianga National Park in the north, including the Tumaco mangroves, the Mira River watershed, the Pangan and Ñambí Forest Reserves and the Awá Territories. In Ecuador, it includes the triangle between El Angel Ecological Reserve, the Ethnic Awá Forest Reserve, the Cotacachi Cayapas Ecological Reserve, and the Cayapas Mataje Mangroves Ecological Reserve.

This priority area is home to a diverse range of ethnic and Afro communities living in and around the Ventana's protected areas in both countries. CEPF's emphasis in this priority area is on providing new land management techniques and alternatives to the communities of the region and on enhancing their capacity to plan and manage the

formally established protected areas. In many cases these protected areas are indigenous reserves where the local communities have a legal mandate to develop and implement such plans.

The set of 5- and 10-year outcomes developed for the Bi-National Ventana is as follows:

5-year Outcomes: Bi-National Ventana
Increase the size of the Pangan Reserve
Establish connectivity between the Barbacos Nariño Reserves
Establishment and management of Cuenca del Mira Mataje Reserve
Create connectivity between the Cotacachi Cayapas – Manglares Cayapas Mataje Ecologica Reserves with the Awa Indigenous Reserves, Golondrinas Protective Forests and El Angel Ecological Reserve
Elaboration and implementation of management plans in the Awa Indigenous Reserves
Consolidation of the Awacachi Micro-Corridor
Create connectivity among the Chachi Indigenous Reserves
10-year Outcomes BI-NATIONAL VENTANA
Improved management of the Forest Reserves of Nariño and the indigenous territories of the Awa
Connectivity established between the Forest Reserves and the Private Barbacoas Nariño
Connectivity established between the El Angel Ecological Reserve, the Golondrinas Protective Forest, and the Ethnic Reserve of Awa

CEPF supports Fauna & Flora International to work with several communities in the establishment of the Awacachi Corridor, a project also supported by the Global Conservation Fund and the Darwin Initiative. This project area is adjacent to other CEPF investments designed to support improved management for the bi-national Awa Indigenous Reserve, as well as connecting it to the Golondrinas Protected Forest and the Gran Chachi Community Reserve. On the Colombian side of the Ventana, another grantee, the Unidad Indígena del Pueblo Awá, also works with the Awá indigenous community doing traditional natural resource use assessments as the basis for developing a land-use policy and zoning plan for the Awá territories.

Given the critical need to establish a common conservation vision that rises above political boundaries, CEPF has already invested in ten projects to seven organizations in this Ventana. These projects focus on establishing the political forums for bi-national dialogue regarding biodiversity conservation, making it an extremely diverse package of grants geared toward a shared vision among many stakeholders. CEPF is supporting efforts by Fundación Altopico in San Lorenzo, Ecuador to create and maintain an inter-institutional committee to lead the corridor strategy and ensure that the decision-makers, the conservation organizations and the local communities are all involved in the process. This work has generated several stakeholder meetings in Ecuador and an important bi-national meeting will take place early in 2005.

Specific priority area conservation outcomes are targeted in particular projects such as the Fundación ProAves project working to expand the Pangan Reserve, as well as a planned project with Fondo Ecuatoriano Populorum Progressio to help develop a management plan for the Cayapas Mataje Ecological Mangrove Reserve.

Mache Chindul Ecological Reserve Ventana (Ecuador)

This priority area is situated in the south-central portion of Esmeraldas Province and the northern portion of Manabí Province. It includes the entire Ecological Reserve, as well as

a significant buffer zone that requires improved land use practices and poses several opportunities for increased connectivity.

The set of 5 and 10 year outcomes developed for the Mache Chindul Ecological Reserve Ventana is as follows:

5-year Outcomes: Mache Chindul Ecological Reserve Ventana
Develop a management plan for the Mache Chindul Ecological Reserve
Creation of a micro-corridor that connects Mache Chindul with the remnant forests of Punta Galeras, Mompiche and the Estuario de Cojimies
10- year Outcomes Mache Chindul Ecological Reserve Ventana
Establishment of microcorridors from Mutilus to the north and the Protective Forest Pata de Pájaro to the south

In the Mache-Chindul Ecological Reserve Ventana, CEPF is funding several projects related directly to the set of conservation outcomes defined for this region. Corporación para la Investigación, Capacitación y Apoyo Técnico para el Manejo Sustentable de los Ecosistemas Tropicales (EcoPar) and partners recently implemented a grant to develop a five-year management plan for the Mache-Chindul Ecological Reserve, which was presented to Ecuador’s Ministry of the Environment in December, 2004. Fundación Ecuatoriana para los Estudios Ecológicos (EcoCiencia) is testing several participatory approaches to conserving the humid forests of Punta Galeras including the establishment of a network of local nongovernmental organizations, private landowners and municipalities to support conservation efforts; development of a conservation action plan; placement of 1,000 hectares of forest under formal protection; and community-based development projects in buffer zones.

CEPF has also provided grants to a consortium of partners, led by Fundación Jatun Sacha, working to improve the management of the Laguna del Cube in the Mache-Chindul Ecological Reserve. The thrust of this grant is to promote sustainable practices that halt the loss of habitat, increase the forest coverage and improve the livelihoods of communities. Additionally, a planned project with Fundación de Defensa Ecológica (FUNDECOL) will address the critical need to develop a community management plan for the mangroves of the Muisne River Estuary Wildlife Refuge.

Machalilla Nacional Park Ventana (Ecuador)

The smallest of the priority areas is the Machalilla Nacional Park Ventana. This Ventana connects the northern portion of the Park with the Chone and Portoviejo River watersheds, and in the southern portion with the Chongón Colonche Protected Forest. While only part of this area is under government established protection status, there are good opportunities for expanding protection within the region, as well as creating connectivity between areas. The intention here is to develop more of a conservation corridor rather than simply reinforcing protection of several isolated protected areas. Defined outcomes have been well integrated into the design process of these grants, maximizing their contribution to the achievement of the strategic needs of the Ventana.

The set of 5 and 10 year outcomes developed for the Machalilla National Park Ventana is as follows:

5-year Outcomes: Machalilla National Park Ventana
Network of local actors established, with the participation of the Municipalities, to protect Machililla National Park
10-year Outcomes: Machalilla National Park Ventana
Creation of micro-corridors that connect the northern and southern portions of the Park and also with the Bosque Protector Chongón Colonche

Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli (CISP) is working to build the capacity of local actors to better manage both the Machililla National Park and the Chongón Colonche Protected Forest. They aim to increase local and provincial government capacity to conserve critical areas in Manabí through training, development of local conservation plans, improved coordination of government activities, and provision of basic equipment.

CEPF has also supported the Asociación Ecuatoriana de Ecoturismo (ASEC) to improve the management and biodiversity conservation of Machalilla National Park through a participatory process of elaboration and implementation of a system of minimum environmental, social and service quality standards for tourism providers in and around the Park.

Regional

In addition to the Ventana focus, it was apparent that a few grants with a corridor-wide impact were needed to fully achieve CEPF's investment goals. A key step to ensuring stakeholder buy-in to a bi-national strategy is the clear definition of terms and goals. To this end, CEPF has supported Conservation International to establish a forum to bring together key stakeholders to devise a bi-national communications strategy for the Corridor. Along the same lines, funding was granted to the Rainforest Alliance to facilitate communication about the projects being implemented within the corridor and beyond to other regions of Latin America. The objective of this grant was to ensure better dissemination of methodologies and projects to allow for reduced duplication of efforts and provide a forum to establish partnerships between organizations working towards the same objectives.

Project planning is currently being completed for a corridor-wide biodiversity-monitoring program to be led by World Wildlife Fund with Conservation International, FUNDECOL and EcoCiencia collaborating as partners. The project aims to provide decision-makers at the local, national and regional levels with increased access to and understanding of environmental trends in the Corridor.

Working with the World Bank

The CEPF strategy for the Choco-Manabi Corridor was derived in large part from several World Bank initiatives in the region, in particular, the Natural Resource Management Program - PMRN that helped establish the Colombian Forest Action Plan and led to investments in biodiversity across four components: political and development strategy; national parks; rehabilitation of watersheds; and education, capacity, research and administration. In addition, Bank support helped develop the zoning of the Pacific ecology, processes for titling areas belonging to indigenous and Afro communities, the formulation of management plans for various parks and the creation of new protected

areas; with a total of more that \$19 million. This combination of efforts was, and continues to be, carefully considered in the design, definition and actual implementation of the strategic directions for the Corridor under CEPF. A principal aim is to consolidate the results of these earlier experiences with the investments made by CEPF and others, including the Environmental Action Fund (FAA), government partners, NGOs and community groups.

In addition, CEPF is making a concerted effort to build on the World Bank/GEF efforts in the area of models for providing payment for environmental services. This is true in the case of CIPAV in which CEPF is finalizing a grant agreement that builds on their experience from a World Bank/GEF project (grant TF053084) where CIPAV and the Asociación de Autoridades Indígenas del Occidentes del Cauca (Atizo) designed and tested models for providing payment for environmental services to private land owners in the corridor of Munchique National Park and Serrania de Pinche.

Conclusion – Next Steps

A large portion of the granting for this portfolio is already well underway, but we have some strategic funding opportunities still on the horizon. For example, a targeted, locally managed small grants program has not been developed. Areas being explored include targeting critically endangered species, as well as the need to more effectively support and build the capacity of local communities for improved design and implementation of their required natural resource management plans. The objective is to find the right set of partners to develop such a program that is not country specific, but rather a corridor-wide program that would attract other donors and create a sustained program well beyond the CEPF funding cycle.

In addition to such a small grants program, CEPF will continue to look for interesting leveraging opportunities. Our greatest successes are those in which we match funds with other organizations toward a set of objectives in line with the CEPF strategy. This has already happened with the Colombian Environmental Action Fund that will match up to \$100,000 per external grant made. We will continue to seek similar arrangements in an attempt to multiply the resources of CEPF and to foster the sustainability of many of our partner organizations working to improve the status of biodiversity conservation in the Choco-Manabi Corridor.

- January 2005

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Charts: Chocó-Darién-Western Ecuador: Chocó-Manabi Conservation Corridor

Chart 1: Approved Grants by Priority Areas

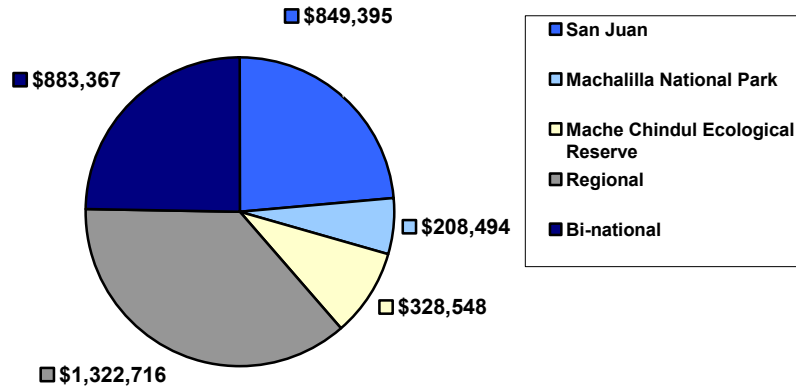


Chart 2: Approved Grants by Ventana and Strategic Direction

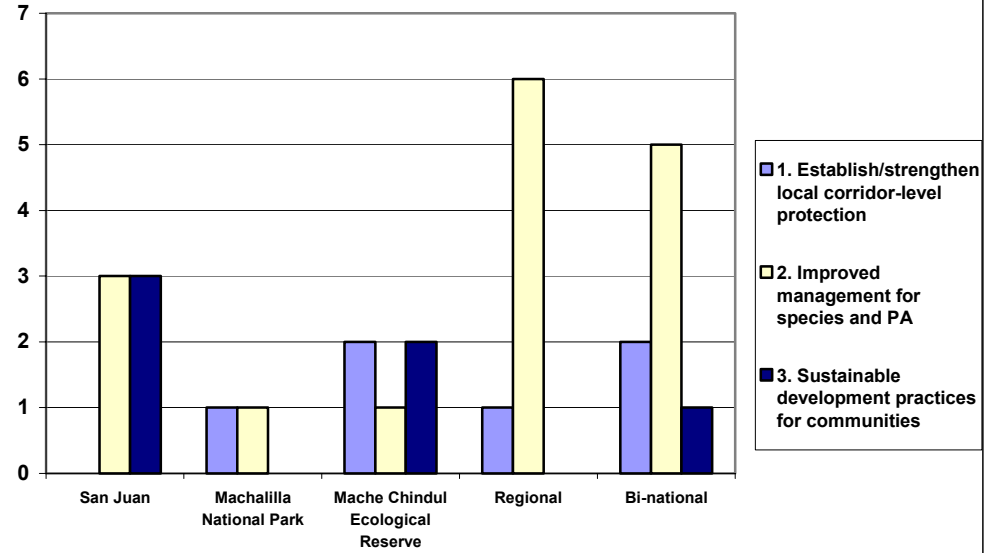


Chart 3: Portfolio Status by Strategic Direction

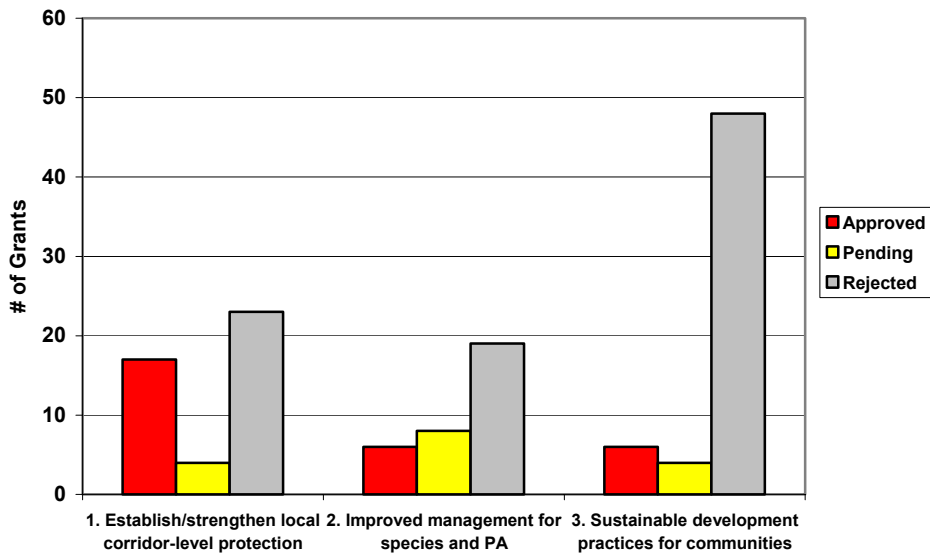


Chart 4: Combined Value of Grants Awarded

