



USAID | **LIBERIA**
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

PROSPER

PEOPLE, RULES AND ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTING THE
PROTECTION OF ECOSYSTEM RESOURCES

PRELIMINARY SITE ASSESSMENT REPORT

June 2012

This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by Tetra Tech ARD.



This report was prepared for the United States Agency for International Development, Contract No. AID-669-C-12-00004 People, Rules and Organizations Supporting the Protection of Ecosystem Resources (PROSPER) Project

Principal contacts:

Steve Reid, Chief of Party, Tetra Tech ARD, Monrovia, Liberia, stephen.reid@tetratech.com
Dmitri Obolensky, Project Manager, Tetra Tech ARD, Burlington, Vermont,
dmitri.obolensky@tetratech.com

Implemented by:

Tetra Tech ARD
People, Rules and Organizations Supporting the Protection of Ecosystem Resources
(PROSPER)
Off Redemption Road
Monrovia, Liberia

Tetra Tech ARD
P.O. Box 1397
Burlington, VT 05402
Tel: 802-658-3890

Cover Photo: Mount Gibi in Margibi County; one of the potential PROSPER sites
Cover Photo Credit: Vaneska Litz

People, Rules and Organizations Supporting the Protection of Ecosystem Resources (PROSPER)

Preliminary Site Selection Assessment Report

June 2012

DISCLAIMER

The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acronyms	2
Background	3
What is a site?	3
Criteria for Selection	3
Methodology	4
Assessment Team	5
Preliminary Site Assessment Descriptions	6
MARSHALL COMMUNITY AND ISLANDS	6
WOHN COMMUNITY, GIBI DISTRICT, MARGIBI COUNTY	8
BARCOLINE COMMUNITY, DISTRICT, GRAND BASSA COUNTY	10
WONEGIZI AND LUYEAMA FORESTS, ZORZOR LOFA COUNTY	12
BONDI CLAN, VOINJAMA DISTRICT, LOFA COUNTY	14
KPATAWEE CLAN, SUAKOKO DISTRICT, BONG COUNTY	16
GBLOR CLAN, TAPITA DISTRICT, NIMBA COUNTY	18
SEYHI CLAN, SENNEQUELLIE-MAH DISTRICT, NIMBA COUNTY	20
Potential Office Sites	21
Recommendations	21

ACRONYMS

AML	Arcelor Mittal Liberia
AYP	Advancing Youth Program
CFDC	Community Forestry Development Committee
CFMA	Community Forest Management Agreement
CI	Conservation International
CRL	Community Rights Law
FDA	Forestry Development Authority
FED	Food Enterprise Development Project
FFI	Fauna and Flora International
FMC	Forest Management Concession
LAC	Liberian Agriculture Company
LFSP	Liberia Forest Support Program
LRCFP	Land Rights and Community Forestry Program
MDA	Minerals Development Agreement
NFRL	National Forestry Reform Law
PES	Payment for Environmental Services
PROSPER	People, Rules and Organizations Supporting the Protection of Ecosystem Resources
PUP	Private Use Permit
SADS	Skills and Agricultural Development Services
SAMFU	Save My Future Foundation
SCNL	Society for the Conservation of Nature in Liberia
TSC	Timber Sale Contract
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USFS	United States Forest Service

People, Rules and Organizations Supporting the Protection of Ecosystem Resources (PROSPER)

BACKGROUND

Under the PROSPER project, ARD has committed to working in up to 9 sites in Liberia to support and build on the development of community forestry that was started under the USAID Land Rights and Community Forestry Project (LRCFP) and continued under the US Forest Service (USFS) Liberia Forestry Support Program (LFSP). USAID has limited sites to the following counties: Nimba, Bong, Margibi, Grand Bassa and Lofa. Two of the existing LRCFP/LFSP sites have already been approved by USAID through the proposal process: the Zor and Gba communities in northern Nimba County (see Figure 1.1 for location). Additional sites must be selected and approved by USAID within the first quarter of the project. This report is a contract deliverable under PROSPER, and provides a summary of findings from preliminary site selection assessments conducted by PROSPER team members in June 2012. It concludes with recommendations for site selection.

WHAT IS A SITE?

PROSPER will work at multiple sites. Community forests will be the central organizing principle at sites. While land use decisions may be made at the town level by section chiefs, for example, community forestlands are used and managed at a larger scale and decisions about the forest are generally made at the clan level. Generally, clans in Liberia are politically defined and loosely follow ethnic divisions but are geographically circumscribed. That said, a clan area may include people from many different ethnic groups. Accordingly, our assessed sites comprise many towns and villages but are generally defined at the clan(s) level.

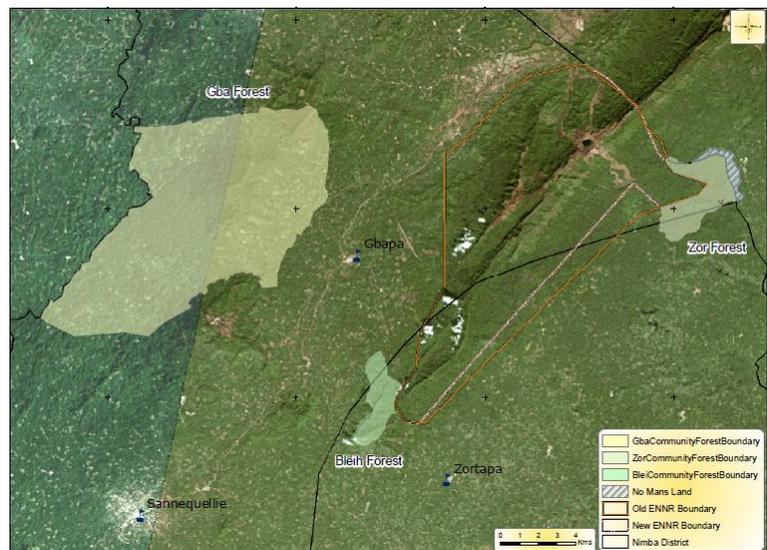


Figure 1: Presentation of the three community forests and the East Nimba Nature Reserve in northern Nimba. These were pilot sites under the LRCFP. Activities will continue in these sites under USAID PROSPER.

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

Several criteria were examined in order to make a preliminary determination about site selection. A short description of each criterion is summarized below.

Biodiversity conservation value and threats: Biodiversity includes the flora and fauna associated with an assessed site. Species and associated habitat for rare, threatened or endangered species represent high value. In this context, threats to biodiversity include unsustainable extraction of resources and destruction of habitat from human activity. This may include logging, hunting, clearing for local level or commercial agriculture, mining, road construction, in-migration, and other factors.

Governance and local government capacity: Governance capacity factors include the existence and relative power of local institutions to manage resources and represent community interests.

Land tenure security: The Forestry Development Authority (FDA) has the legal mandate to manage the nation's forests. Most forestland in Liberia is considered customarily owned by individuals or communities but is not deeded or recorded. Communities may secure tenure rights over their forests lands either through deeded fee simple communal ownership, or through a Community Forestry Management Agreement (CFMA) – a process outlined in the Community Rights Law (CRL) which provides use and management rights for 15 years in conformity with an FDA-approved management plan. The FDA oversees Forest Management Concessions (FMC) or Timber Sale Contracts (TSC) on forestlands that are not under a CFMA or are not privately held, through a process outlined in the National Forestry Reform Law (NFRL) and its regulations. Individual land owners may engage in commercial timber extraction on their land after obtaining a Private Use Permit. There is no regulation specific to the PUP. The process by which communities may apply for commercial use of forest resources on private community land (through a PUP or other mechanism) is presented in the CRL. However, the process spelled out in the CRL has not been followed by the FDA for a number of recently issued PUPs for private land held in fee simple by communities. This has raised questions about the legality of these PUP. In addition to these various claims to forestlands, the Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy may allocate exploratory mining concessions for minerals in forestlands, and the Ministry of Agriculture oversees agricultural concessions that may cover forestlands.

The existence of these concessions may undermine community tenure. Conflicting tenure claims with adjacent communities also represent a threat to tenure. Accordingly, deeded, customary and contractual land tenure claims were examined in the selection process.

Opportunities to leverage private, public civil society engagement: The presence of private companies, other donor-supported projects, and local NGOs presents an opportunity to leverage additional resources but also poses the risk of duplication of efforts. Accordingly, the presence of other organizations and the potential for collaboration and conflict is also an important factor in site selection. Particular emphasis was placed on identifying United States Agency for International Development (USAID) programming in the proposed sites.

Potential for enterprise development: Enterprise development requires entrepreneurs. Accordingly, the site assessors looked at the existence of local enterprises at potential sites. Distance of sites from markets, the condition of roads, and the availability of transport were also examined.

Potential for Payments for Environmental Services (PES): PES mechanisms include conservation offsets, conservation and management agreements, trust funds, and similar mechanisms that may provide income to communities in support of management activities in community forests linked to attainment of conservation or ecosystem protection objectives. This factor is closely tied to the examination of land tenure, as it is necessary to determine community rights as well as to identify potential funders that have competing or complementary rights to the proposed land.

Logistical considerations: This includes road conditions, proximity to other sites, cell phone coverage, and distance from potential offices in county cities where the offices will need to be located. PROSPER will have three field offices. The most likely candidate sites for these offices are Gbanga, Senequellie, Kakata, Voinjama, Tapata, and/or Buchanan

METHODOLOGY

Forest cover maps were consulted to determine areas of significant forest cover as an initial proxy for **biodiversity**. Reports from conservation organizations Fauna and Flora International (FFI) and Conservation International (CI) were consulted, and meetings were held with the Society for the Conservation Nature in Liberia (SCNL), Skills and Agriculture Development Services (SADS), CI and the FDA. This was complemented by discussions at the community level where communities were asked to identify forest species.

A comprehensive threats analysis will be conducted within the first 6 months of project implementation. However, to make a preliminary determination of **threats to biodiversity**, the assessment teams referenced maps of forest concessions, forest cover maps, and analyzed community sketch maps to identify roads and the location of farms, concessions and Private Use Permits. In interviews and meetings with community leaders, participants were asked to identify threats at the local level.

Information regarding **governance institutions** and their relative power was determined through meetings with County officials, District Commissioners¹, and self-selected leaders of the community to develop a snapshot of the local governance institutions and their relative influence. Stakeholder identification exercises were conducted at the community level with community leaders and other community representatives, along with analyses of local power dynamics.

Land tenure issues, including identification of adjacent communities, were examined at the local level through stakeholder identification and mapping exercises. Meetings were also held with representatives from the Land Commission, county and national government agencies including FDA, County Superintendents², and local leaders (District Commissioners, Paramount Chiefs, Town Chiefs, women and youth leaders). Inquiries were made regarding both customary and deeded land claims. FMC, TSC and Private Use Permit maps and documents were also consulted where available.

Opportunities to leverage private and civil society engagement were examined through stakeholder mapping and identification exercises at the local level and through interviews and formal and informal meetings at the community and county level, as well as with stakeholders at the national level (e.g. FDA, Land Commission, CI, Arcelor Mittal Limited, BHP Billiton). Meetings were also held with other USAID projects to determine their geographic scope.

Potential for the development of **enterprise development** was assessed through observation at the local level, through interviews with community members, and through stakeholder analyses.

The potential for **PES** was determined primarily through meetings with CI to discuss conservation agreements, and through stakeholder analyses at the local level where interests were identified and discussed by local communities.

Each of the sites assessed was visited by a PROSPER assessment team in June 2012 at the beginning of the rainy season. **Logistical considerations** such as phone coverage, road conditions, and proximity to potential office sites were assessed by the teams during the site selection process.

ASSESSMENT TEAM

The three assessment teams were composed as follows:

- **Team 1:** Dominic Kweme (Organizational Development Advisor); Esthella W. Miller (Gender Mainstreaming Officer)
- **Team 2:** Nobeh Jackson (Outreach and Communications Advisor); Martin Vessellee (former LRCFP Livelihoods Officer)
- **Team 3:** Nuah Biah (Forestry Officer and Nimba Head of Office); Hodo Bedell (Livelihoods Advisor)

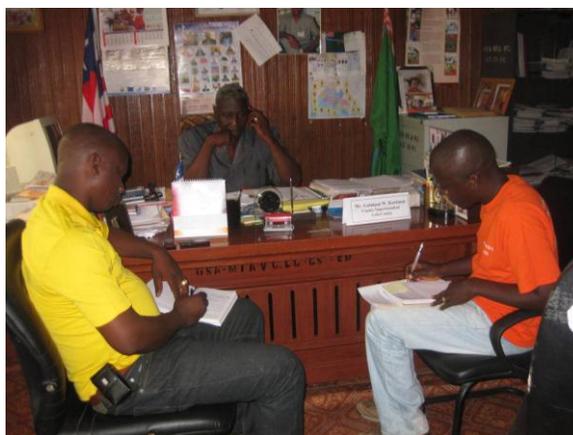


Figure 2: The Assessment Team is briefed in Lofa County on development issues by the County Superintendent in Voinjama.

¹ District Commissioners are responsible for all land issues in the district and are agents of the Ministry of Interior Affairs

² County Superintendents are responsible for approving all development projects within their county.

PRELIMINARY SITE ASSESSMENT DESCRIPTIONS

MARSHALL COMMUNITY AND ISLANDS

Location and Logistics

The Marshall Community is located on the coast between Monrovia and Robertsport Airfield. The community is accessible year-round on a laterite road that connects the highway to Marshall City, the administrative head of the community. Cell phone coverage is weak, but the Celcom network is available in Marshall City. The Marshall community forests are primarily mangrove forests and are located in and around the community. The community considers the Marshall Islands their customary land.

The community is made up of approximately 16 towns most of which are dominated by the Bassa people. Marshall City is the largest town in the community and is made up of Fanti, Kru and Bassa people living in five distinct areas within the city. The Fanti and Kru are primarily fisher people and the community relies heavily on fishermen and the associated industry (fish drying and mongering) for their livelihoods.

Biodiversity and Threats

The Marshall Island forests are part of a larger mangrove ecosystem that provides critical marine habitat for a wide range of species and is categorized as a Ramsar Site (this needs to be confirmed) for its biodiversity importance. Threats to that habitat may include overfishing and sand mining for construction. As yet, mangrove forests are not being filled for development purposes, although this is a potential threat given Marshall's proximity to Monrovia. Wood from mangrove species is used as fuelwood to dry fish and may represent a threat to this fragile ecosystem.

Governance

Marshall City has a strong mayor, but an analysis of stakeholders and their relative power revealed that the most influential decision-makers in Marshall are absentee landlords and businesspeople based in Monrovia. This will need to be taken into consideration and meetings held with these absentee leaders in order to ensure their buy-in before a final selection can be made.

The three ethnic groups within Marshall appear to co-exist peacefully. The Fanti, Kru and Bassa people each have their own governor and each were identified and represented at the stakeholder meeting called by the assessment team. An air of mutual respect and cooperation prevails that is presumed to be based on their mutual dependence: the Kru and Fanti fishermen provide the mainstay for the local economy.

Land Tenure

Concerns were raised by the Land Commission that there may be too many private and political interests in Marshall to make this site viable. The mangrove forests, however, do not appear to be of interest to the private individuals with interests in developing land in and around Marshall. In fact, these interested parties may actually benefit from the project (and thus support it) if it includes enterprise development around eco-tourism as will be discussed below.

The New York Blood Center subsidiary, VILAB, (sometimes referred to as Liberia Institute for Biomedical Research) is located in Charlesville, a neighboring community. VILAB has a contract with the Ministry of Health to place and feed sterilized chimpanzees on the Marshall Islands – located just off of Marshall City's shoreline. This arrangement and the aggressive nature of these chimpanzees currently render the islands off limits to the people of Marshall. This is a source of resentment for the Marshall community as the community considers the islands to be their customary land. Community forestry could provide a means for communities to secure management rights over these mangrove forests, but engagement and negotiation with VILAB will be necessary. VILAB's parent company has expressed interest in closing the lab and converting it into a chimp rehabilitation center. The potential opportunities presented by this are discussed below.

The Maritime Authority also exerts some management control over the area and will need to be engaged in the management of any community mangrove forest management. The community was unaware of any private deeded mangrove land.

Payment for Environmental Services

The NY Blood Center wants to close the research facility run by their subsidiary, VILAB, and have expressed interest in converting the facility to a chimp rehabilitation center with a sizeable endowment³. This could also serve as a much-needed rehabilitation center for confiscated wildlife in Liberia⁴. A community-managed protected area near Monrovia could provide economic opportunities for the Marshall community. Ongoing care and feeding of the chimps could be incorporated into a management plan that includes eco-tourism while also preventing unauthorized trips to the islands that could pose security risks to both human and chimpanzees.

According to the former Managing Director of the FDA, Mr. John Woods, VILAB does not have official permission to operate. Perhaps to avoid any legal fallout, the NY Blood Center has indicated its interest in donating \$6 million to shut the lab down and ensure the long-term welfare of the research animals. This money could be placed in a Trust Fund and the interest income generated could be used to support the lab and other payments for environmental services provided by the community⁵. USAID PROSPER could facilitate bringing the different parties together to secure this arrangement for this important mangrove forest.

Opportunities to leverage other projects

In addition to the VILAB opportunity described above, the absence of an endowment does not preclude the negotiation of an arrangement whereby communities would assume responsibility for feeding the chimps. This could provide ecotourism opportunities for the community that would include education and awareness tours for visitors and picnics on the many beaches in the area.

The Maritime Authority Offices are located in Marshall City and there is potential for collaboration there. The Save My Future Foundation (SAMFU) was conducting some sea turtle conservation work but does not appear to be actively engaged in the community. There are many influential landowners in the area including local businessmen (there is a hotel in Marshall City) and former members of Congress. Community leaders did not report any other donor projects working in the area.

Enterprise development

Most of the enterprises in Marshall revolve around the fishing industry. Sustainable management of the fishery will need to be balanced with enterprise development around this resource, particularly given the growing demand for seafood in Liberia as wealth increases, and Marshall's proximity to Monrovia. Local business people from Monrovia with interests in the community are potential partners and collaborators.

³ <http://hepatitisresearch.org/vilab2chimpsanctuary.htm>

⁴ Currently, there is no facility for confiscated wildlife and therefore no incentives exist to enforce conservation regulations.

⁵ A conservative return of 5% on the investment would provide US\$300,000 in returns that could be used at the chimp rehabilitation center and to support community forest activities and sustainable development in Marshall.

WOHN COMMUNITY, GIBI DISTRICT, MARGIBI COUNTY

Location and Logistics

The Wohn Community is located in Gibi District, east of Kakata City. The district town and many of the villages are accessible on a well maintained laterite road. Most of the forestland is located to the east of the district town toward the Grand Bassa border. These primary forests are located several hours walk from most of the major towns, but the community's forests also include many secondary forests. The Gibi Mountain is located within the community's land and is considered sacred. It is not used by the community for farming.

The community is made up of two clans, the Gbankanaklor clan and the Mavehn Clan, and includes 96 towns. Bassa and Kru are the two main ethnic groups. The community (comprising the two clans) considers the forested land to be its own customarily, and was not aware of deeded rights despite the recent signing of a Private Use Permit (see discussion under Land Tenure below). The Celcom network reaches some of the towns but coverage is weak.

Biodiversity and Threats

The Gibi Forest represents some of the last remaining primary forest in close proximity to Monrovia, and contains many valuable commercial species. It constitutes a remnant of the Upper Guinean rainforest and provides critical habitat for a wide range of species in an increasingly degraded environment. Threats to biodiversity include land clearing for agriculture and hunting. There is a Private Use Permit covering more than 20,000 hectares of the community's forest, but the assessment team was not able to see a management or operations plan to determine the scope of the proposed operations.

Governance

The District Commissioner is a strong leader and a recognized politician in the area. He clearly has good relations with the Paramount Chief, Women's leader and the Youth in particular and was able to mobilize community leaders for a meeting with the assessment team on short notice. The County Superintendent was also very supportive of the project and welcomes the opportunity to implement in his County. Clan Chiefs, General Chiefs (with jurisdiction over multiple towns) and Town Chiefs have strong leadership roles in their respective communities.

Land Tenure

The District Commissioner, Paramount Chief, Women Leader and Youth Leader represented the community in submitting a request that was approved by the FDA for a Private Use Permit (PUP) to log the community's forest. Akewa, a Nigerian Company, currently holds the contract for forestry operations in the community's forest. The PUP includes a copy of an aborigine grant deed that was signed in 1953 by President Tubman granting the community ownership in fee simple over 26,496 hectares. The PUP covers 22,162.8 hectares of that land (all of the potential harvestable area of the community forest), and is valid for 13 years. A copy of the contract with Akewa was not available so it is not clear how much of that area is currently under contract for logging by Akewa.

PUPs are supposed to be governed by a specific regulation, but no regulation has been passed (NFRL §5.6). Further, the CRL specifically identifies communally owned lands, including those held in fee simple, as community forests. The CRL and its regulation clearly set out the process by which a community may enter into a commercial contract.

Many questions have been raised recently about the legality of such PUPs, particularly those that have been granted on community land owned in fee simple by the community, none of which have followed the process presented in the CRL. In this case, the FDA is treating the PUP as a concession and has assisted the community to set up a Community Forest Development Committee (CFDC) and has brokered a Social Agreement between the community and Akewa.

When the assessment team approached the District Commissioner and other community parties to the PUP, all denied understanding that the community owned the land in fee simple. This may well be true as the laws regarding land tenure are complicated, contradictory, and not well understood (or accessible) by the general population. Regardless, the assessment team discussed with these leaders the potential implications of PROSPER operating in their community. The team noted, first, that the community forest might not be a viable option if Akewa has rights over the entire area, and second, that the awareness raised by PROSPER would undoubtedly result in community members asking questions about: the process by which Akewa was engaged; whether negotiations had been conducted in the communities' best interests, and; if the agreement conformed to the legal mandate of the CRL. If the contract is being treated as a concession, the communities have certainly given away more rights to government than is necessary under a PUP.



Figure 3: Community leaders in Gibi District map their community forest and stakeholder interests

These issues and the brewing controversy over PUPs at the national level could foment conflict within the community and will require strong leadership and collaboration to manage effectively. While there is strong leadership within the community, there is a decided lack of knowledge among that leadership about community rights and responsibilities under the Forestry Law and the CRL.

No major conflicts were identified in the preliminary site assessment process.

Payment for Environmental Services

No potential PES schemes were identified in the assessment process

Opportunities to leverage other projects

Community leaders did not report any other donor projects working in the area. Given their proximity to Kakata, it is probable that villages within this district will benefit from the activities of the USAID Food and Enterprise Development (FED) Project. FED is not yet working there, however (this needs to be confirmed). There may be an opportunity to work with Akewa to assist in the implementation of the Social Agreement. Restrictions on the Congressional Omnibus Budget, however, forbid USG funds from being used to directly support the deforestation of tropical forests. As a result, collaboration between PROSPER and Akewa or any other logging company will need to be scrutinized for compliance with this Congressional requirement

Enterprise development

Given its proximity to Firestone and Liberia Agriculture Company (LAC), agroforestry involving rubber represents a potential enterprise development opportunity and livelihood activity. The excellent road system also provides access to the Kakata and Monrovia markets.

BARCOLINE COMMUNITY, DISTRICT, GRAND BASSA COUNTY

Location and Logistics

The Barcoline community is believed to be within the city limits of Buchanan. Bleewin can be accessed via a laterite road that is in good condition and runs south of the port of Buchanan. It is a 10 minute drive from the port to Bleewin Village. Bleewin serves as the central hub for the entire community which comprises 12 towns. The Bassa are the predominant tribe, followed by the Kru and some Fanti. The remaining population represents other tribes, reflecting the proximity to Buchanan, a major urban area in Liberia with a mixed population representing many ethnic groups. The total population of the community is estimated at 1,600. Cell phone coverage is very good.

Biodiversity and Threats

The community forest is a mosaic of mangrove forests that is located within the community boundaries and surrounds a small tributary that flows from the mangrove interior to the coast. By tradition, the river is protected from fishing. The mapping exercise identified two major mangroves, one close to Massa Town and the “Gaar” river; and the other mangrove forest near the Newcress town and River.

The mangroves and the river provide habitat for a host of species including many species of fish, monkey and deer. The main threats to this habitat and the species found there include farming, hunting (for local consumption; primarily deer and hogs), chain sawing and charcoal production.

The beach is collectively owned by the community and is a known sea turtle nesting site that is visited by five of the seven sea turtle species in the world in November and December. Because of this biodiversity significance, the community has been selected as the venue for the celebration of the World Environmental Day program. The county leadership in collaboration with Arcelor Mittal Liberia (AML) is conducting a massive clean-up campaign along the beaches of Barcoline community in preparation for this event. The communities reported that they have not collected eggs because they have been told not to by scientists, and because the fishermen believe the turtles will protect them if they capsizes while fishing. Despite this, AML reported that environmental monitors confiscated newly-hatched turtles from fishermen.

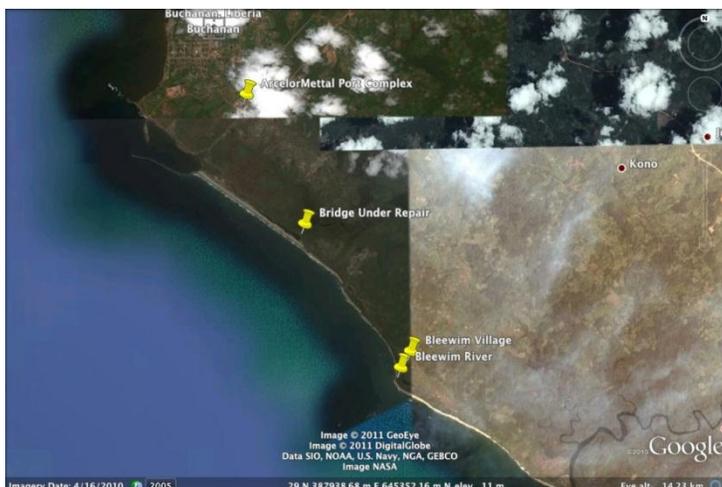


Figure 4: Location of Barcoline relative to the port of Buchanan

Governance

The Barcoline community is under the leadership of a Unification Town Chief who is the head of the community, and interestingly, a young Youth Leader. The next in authority is the Tribal Chief who is responsible for intervening to resolve disputes in the community. The surrounding towns are headed by Town Chiefs and by elders who are consulted regularly before major decisions are taken.

A District FDA forester accompanied the site assessment team to Barcoline, but the FDA has had little to do with the governance of mangroves in Grand Bassa.

Land Tenure

There does not appear to be any deeded ownership to the land. The proximity of the community to Buchanan and its potential for tourism development may present future threats to community ownership

Payment for Environmental Services

Chevron is currently drilling for oil offshore of Buchanan. CI submitted a proposal to Chevron in early 2012 to support a conservation agreement with the Barcoline Community to manage the mangroves and turtle nesting sites. To date, CI has not received a response from Chevron. This Conservation Agreement could be linked to, and fund, activities under a Community Forest Management plan.



Figure 5: The Barcoline Community Beach



Figure 6: The flow of the Bleewin River forms an inland mangrove forest.

Opportunities to leverage other projects

AML has expressed interest in working with this community as part of its conservation offset for the Buchanan port. Similarly, CI is interested in a conservation agreement (see above). The Advancing Youth Project (AYP) is working in Buchanan District and discussions are currently underway regarding collaboration. Although FED is not currently active in Barcoline, PROSPER will contact it regarding potential collaboration. The World Bank recently upgraded the access road with bridges, and UNDP recently built a clinic.

Enterprise development

Given its proximity to Buchanan, Barcoline is well situated to take advantage of the Buchanan markets. The Unification Chief has a small livestock operation, and members of Bleewin village expressed interest in exploring alternative crops such as rubber, cashew, oil palm and pineapple. An entrepreneurial atmosphere is apparent in the community.

WONEGIZI AND LUYEAMA FORESTS, ZORZOR LOFA COUNTY

Location and Logistics

The Wonegizi and Luyeama Forests are located in Zorzor District and are primarily managed by four towns in the **Ziama clan** – Konia, Ziggida, Luyeama and Vetesu – that are located in close proximity to these forests. However, there are a total of **25-towns and villages** with vested interests in the Wonegizi and Luyeama Forests: 16 villages in Wonegizi, and 9 in the Luyeama.

The 260 km stretch of dirt road between Gbarnga and Voinjama is accessible by light vehicles and 4-wheel drive trucks, especially during the dry season. Regular maintenance would keep the road passable throughout the year. Community feeder roads assessed during the team’s visit in Zorzor Districts were in good condition in June 2012 and provided relatively easy access between towns, which were all less than 30-40 minutes’ drive apart. Cell phone coverage is spotty, encompassing only about 40% of the area. A staff member of a local NGO informed the assessment team that by the end of June 2012, one of the GSM service providers in Liberia would have completed the installation of its relay tower in Konia to boost network coverage in Ziama Clan and adjacent towns along the route to Voinjama.

Biodiversity and Threats

Mount Wonegizi is in the heart of the Wonegizi Forest. The forests surrounding Mt Wonegizi are a mosaic of primary and secondary forests and provide habitat for a rich array of fauna and flora species. A portion of the forest covering almost 40,000 hectares has been proposed as a Protected Area and communities are aware of this. The total size of this forest inclusive of the proposed protected area is unknown but could well exceed the 50,000 hectare threshold for community forests. The main threats to biodiversity according to local leaders include poaching, farming, and chain sawing.

The Luyeama Forest is adjacent to the Wonegizi Forest and shares similar characteristics. It was logged as recently as 1993, however, so includes less primary forest than the Wonegizi. Its total area is also unknown but could exceed 50,000 hectares.

Governance

The key decision makers in the community include the Clan Chief, Town Chiefs, Youth Leaders, Women Leaders and Elders. Interestingly, participants in site assessment meetings reported that elders held less sway in their community than women or youth. The latter play a major role at their community level, but feel disempowered with regard to larger issues concerning development and resource management. Landlords have considerable influence on land matters, but the clan chief is the most important decision maker on land issues at the community/clan level.



Figure 7: Mount Wonegizi, the heart of a proposed protected area and proposed USAID PROSPER site.

The relationship between the District FDA Office and the County Superintendent is strained. The County Superintendent cited a specific incident in which he accused the FDA of instigating a conflict among the people of Gbluyama Community by preparing and negotiating a memorandum of understanding with one community group for a timber company to cut trees in the Gbluyama Forest without the consent and participation of the county authority and the other community group. (The agreement in question may be a PUP that was issued in Kolahun District covering more than 32,000 hectares.) According to the Superintendent, the incident led to a conflict between communities that he has been left to resolve. He expressed frustration that FDA staff engages

communities on resource matters without regard to the county authority. Knowledge of the CRL is non-existent at the community level.

Land Tenure

There does not appear to be any deeded ownership to the land which is generally acquired through the customary tenure system. Part of the community area may fall within an area mapped by the FDA as an unallocated FMC/TSC area. It should also be noted that there are a number of PUPs that have been issued in Lofa County. The controversies created by PUPs (see discussion above) may contribute to land tenure instability in Lofa County. In addition to the PUP discussed above, an additional PUP has been issued in Zorzor District totaling 139,392 hectares.

Payment for Environmental Services

There were no PES schemes identified. A conservation agreement for the proposed protected area is a possibility if the area is managed under a CFMA. However, at this juncture, no international environmental NGO or organization has expressed an interest in supporting the creation of this protected area.

Opportunities to leverage other projects

AYP works in some of the communities including Luyeama. It is not clear if FED will be operating in this area (this needs to be confirmed). The local NGO, SADS, was operating in the area and still maintains a small office but currently does not have funding for activities.

Enterprise development

An entrepreneurial atmosphere is apparent in the community and there are commercial producers of products such as groundnuts. NTFP abound in the forest and there may be considerable market opportunities to develop.

“Our people in Monrovia are the ones who can sometimes take decision on our behalf when it comes forest matters, so when we are talking about powerful people, we should also talk about them”

- a youth participant
in Lofa County

BONDI CLAN, VOINJAMA DISTRICT, LOFA COUNTY

Location and Logistics

The Bondi Clan and its forests are located in Voinjama District. Feeder roads to communities assessed during the team's visit in Zorzor Districts were in good condition in June 2012. Cell phone coverage is spotty, covering only about 40% of the area but is anticipated to improve in the next months with the completion of a relay tower in Konia. The Clan comprises 23 towns and villages with 8 key towns having the most stake in the management of the forests. Three forests fall within their community lands: Basamama, Afala and Wologizi.

Biodiversity and Threats

The Wologizi Forest – a proposed protected area – covers more than 100,000 hectares. It is adjacent to the proposed Wonegizi protected area and like the Wonegizi, is an unallocated FMC/TSC. Comprised of primary and secondary forests, it provides habitat for a rich array of fauna and flora species. Part of the Wologizi Forest is apparently owned in fee simple by Mary Kpoto who has obtained a Private Use Permit (one of the few believed to be entirely valid as her deeded interest is an individual fee simple right). Logging is currently under way through Ecowood in Kolahun District. It is not clear if the community's boundaries extend into this district. The Basamama and Afala Forests are smaller than the Wologizi Forest and are a mosaic of secondary and primary forest that provide important habitat for a number of species. The total area of these forests is unknown.

Governance

The key decision makers in the community are the elders, assisted by the youth leader, town chief and women's leader. Like their counterparts in the adjacent community around the Wologizi Mountain, these leaders play a major role at their community level, but feel disempowered with regard to larger issues concerning development and resource management. Landlords are key decision makers on land matters.

Please see the discussion above regarding the relationship between the District FDA Office and the County Superintendent in Lofa County which has been strained, possibly over the issuance of a PUP in this area.

Land Tenure

There does not appear to be any community deeded ownership to the forest, and land is generally acquired through the customary tenure system. Elders and traditional leaders play an important role in land allocation. Part of the community area may fall within an area mapped by the FDA as an unallocated FMC/TSC area. It should also be noted that there are a number of PUPs that have been issued in Lofa County. The controversy created by PUP (see discussion above) may contribute to land tenure instability in Lofa County. It should also be noted that there is a PUP in place in Voinjama District covering more than 72,000 hectares. The exact location is unknown.

Payment for Environmental Services

There were no PES schemes identified. The proposed protected area, should it be managed under a CFMA, has potential to support a Conservation Agreement. However, at this juncture, no international environmental NGO or other organization has expressed an interest in supporting the creation of this protected area.



Figure 8: An entrepreneurial groundnut farmer prepares his product for the market.

Opportunities to leverage other projects

AYP works in some of the communities. It is not clear if FED will be operating in this area (this needs to be confirmed). The local NGO, SADS, was operating in the area and still maintains a small office but currently does not have funding for activities.

Enterprise development

An entrepreneurial atmosphere is apparent in the community and there are commercial producers of products such as groundnuts. NTFP abound in the forest and there may be opportunities to help develop markets for some of them.

KPATAWEE CLAN, SUAKOKO DISTRICT, BONG COUNTY

Location and Logistics

The Suakoko district covers the Suakoko Chiefdom and three clans: Suakoko Clan, Kpatawee Clan and Kporiyorquelleh Clan. There are three forests, the Kpatawee waterfall forest, Nai Forest, and Korlonyea Forest. Communities are interested in managing all three, but during this assessment the Kpatawee waterfall forest was the focus of analysis. The Kpatawee forest is located between the boundaries of the Mehquelleh Clan of Sarnoyea District and the Kpatawee clan of Suakoko District.

Kpatawee is located about 35 minutes' drive from Gbanga at the turnoff of from Phoebe Hospital. The road is in good condition and can be accessed year round. Cell phone coverage is available in some towns.

Biodiversity and Threats

The Kpatawee forest is part of the Bong Range, a primary forest and is estimated at more than 18,000 hectares. The forest covers a mountainous area and has some lowlands suitable for agricultural production. The forest provides valuable habitat for many species of animal including primates and is the watershed for the Kpatawee falls and wetlands, a wetland of international significance. The waterfall originates from the Mein Creek which flows from Guinea through the Bong forest range and enters into the St. John River. Given the sensitivity of the threat to the waterfall and its forest, the President has given orders to the Paramount Chief, Arthur B Wenneh, forbidding felling of trees in the area surrounding the waterfall. Encroachment for shifting cultivation also presents a threat to the forest. Fishing is permitted in the falls.

Governance

The District is headed by a Statutory Superintendent followed by a Commissioner, Paramount Chief, Clan Chiefs, General Town Chiefs, Town Chiefs, Quarter Chiefs, youth leaders and elders.

Land Tenure

The Kpatawee clan shares a common boundary with the Mehquelleh Clan who also claim ownership of the Kpatawee Falls and Forest. The Paramount Chief for the Kpatawee Forest only claimed ownership after Jonah Capital, a South African mining company, received an exploratory mining license in the area. The two clans have since signed a memorandum of understanding restraining the two parties from claims and counter claims until the South African company completes its prospection. Following the prospecting, the Ministry of Lands Mines and Energy will conduct a comprehensive survey to establish true ownership of the land in dispute. This underlying conflict will need to be resolved and the scope of the prospecting license also needs to be ascertained.

In addition to the exploratory license issued to Jonah Capital, there is considerable interest in developing a hydroelectric power dam on the falls. The development of this dam has been attributed to both Winrock and a Chinese interest. The development rights need to be clarified.

Finally, the Chinese have established 100 housing units, allegedly for tourism, in the area of the falls. It is not clear from which government ministry the land rights were granted for this development or if it was granted through a private deed. This too, needs to be determined.

The community's claims to ownership are based on customary use and not deeded ownership.

Payment for Environmental Services

The site is an ideal nature reserve and tourist attraction as well as a site of international significance as a wetland. Depending on the answers to the land tenure questions above, PES is a possibility for watershed protection to ensure a consistent flow of water for the proposed dam. Tourism interests could also provide

funding to support forest stewardship through management agreements. All of these would hinge on resolving the various underlying property rights questions.

Opportunities to leverage other projects

It is unknown at this time if FED will be implementing in the area. Winrock has a project in the area (need to confirm this), as does ACDI/VOCA related to cocoa production (need to confirm this). AYP is working in Suakoko.

Enterprise development

Some of the lowland areas below the waterfall are being cultivated by a Chinese agricultural company with the support of the Ministry of Agriculture. This could increase agriculture productivity and provide an opportunity for agriculture-based enterprise development. If this activity is expanded into the forest, however, it could threaten the watershed.

GBLOR CLAN, TAPITA DISTRICT, NIMBA COUNTY

Location and Logistics

Tapita District comprises four Districts, four Chiefdoms and six clans. The Gblor Clan includes 7 towns and 4 villages. The Gblor Forest borders the Cestos River that separates Grand Gedeh and Nimba counties. The forest can be reached in approximately 25 minutes by vehicle on traversable roads from Dialla Town. Tapita is the headquarters of the FDA District Forestry office. There may be an opportunity for PROSPER to share office space and resources there.

The Gblor Clan Community Reserve Forest is estimated at 400,000 hectares, but includes privately-owned forest land. The forest is divided by the road that passes from Tapita to Zwedru. The portion on the northern side of the road is the area under consideration for community management and it is estimated to cover an area of more than 12,000 hectares.

Biodiversity and Threats

The forest provides valuable habitat for a wide array of species. Communities report hippo, chimpanzees and other primates in the forest. The greatest threats to the biodiversity in the forest include hunting, farming, wildfires (from uncontrolled burning of agricultural lands), pit sawing and the use of mosquito nets for fishing.



Figure 9: Farming in primary forest represents a threat to biodiversity in many of Liberia's forests.

Governance

The District is headed by a Statutory Superintendent, District Commissioners, Paramount Chief, Clan Chiefs, General Town Chiefs, Town Chiefs, Quarter Chiefs, youth leaders and elders in that hierarchical order.

Land Tenure

There is a boundary dispute between Kpahlee Clan and the Gblor Clan regarding the clan boundary. The dispute involves the proposed community forest area.

Community members report that ICC has a timber sale contract in the Tapita Forest, but has not begun operation. The only record that we could find for ICC was FMC K which covers more than 266,910 hectares. It will be important to determine the status of that FMC and determine what has been done under the contract.

The community also reported that a Chinese firm has approached local leaders to discuss the establishment of oil palm plantations. This will require further inquiry to determine if agreements or concessions are in place.

Payment for Environmental Services

No PES schemes were identified in the assessment for the area.

Opportunities to leverage other projects

Equip, ARS, Mercy Corps are all working in the community (additional information is needed). YPA will be expanding in to Tapita in the next year.

Enterprise development

Given the good access and plentiful forest resources and private land adjacent to and in the community forest, wood-based enterprises, cocoa and tree crops have potential for development.

SEYHI CLAN, SENNEQUELLIE-MAH DISTRICT, NIMBA COUNTY

Location and Logistics

The Seyhi Clan is located between Senequellie and the Gba Clan in northern Nimba where PROSPER has established sites through LRCFP. The Seyhi Clan is also represented on the Joint Forest Management Committee that manages the Bleih forest and co-manages the East Nimba Nature Reserve with the FDA. In addition to these forests, there are additional forests that are customarily owned by the Seyhi Community south of the Gba proposed community forest. The forest is situated on a mountain slope and covers approximately 725 hectares.

The Seyhi Clan comprises 18 towns and villages that are easily accessible by road throughout the year. The Celcom network has strong coverage throughout the area.

Biodiversity and Threats

At higher altitudes, primary forest dominates the stands; in the lower altitudes, most of the forest is secondary growth. This forest, referred to as the Delton Forest, is the source of drinking water for the people of Zolowee. It is also a host to many animals and birds species from the East Nimba Nature Reserve. Mining companies have expressed interest in the forest and exploratory licenses may have been issued to the Mount Bleih Resources Company. Hunting, agriculture and logging present the greatest threats to the forest.

Governance

The District Commissioner is very supportive of mining in the District and for this reason the community did not want him to attend the informational meeting. This same Commissioner has been very supportive of the activities in the Gba and Zor community. Follow-up conversations will need to be conducted with the Commissioner to determine his position on community forestry in the Seyhi Clan.

Land Tenure

The Seyhi forestlands are under the AML Mineral Development Agreement (MDA). Other exploratory licenses may have been issued. The community is not aware of any private claims to the forest.

Payment for Environmental Services

The Delton Forest comprises a watershed for Senequellie. Its protection is therefore important to ensure a reliable source of water to Senequellie and to guard against erosion. A PES scheme could be designed to ensure sustainable management of the watershed, although it is not clear where funding would originate. Conservation agreements also hold potential through cooperation with AML.

Opportunities to leverage other projects

AML is providing some support to these communities for schools and health. There are no other projects working in the area at present (this needs to be confirmed).

Enterprise development

Given the good access and plentiful forest resources and private land adjacent to and in the community forest, wood-based enterprises; cocoa; tree crops; oil palm; and other NTFP development are all potential enterprises that could be developed.

POTENTIAL OFFICE SITES

The PROSPER project will add up to seven (7) additional sites and two field offices to support PROSPER programming. Selection of office sites will be an important determinant of site selection. Only two new offices can be opened and each office must serve at least two sites. The potential offices and their service areas are described below. It should also be noted that the Marshall site could be supported from the Monrovia Office.

1. **Tapita Office:** A Tapita office could be established in the District Forestry Offices in Tapita or as a stand-alone building. This would require identification of an additional site, or dividing the proposed site into at least 2 or 3 sites. Given the size of the forest in the area, this is a distinct possibility.
2. **Kakata Office:** This office could serve both the Kpatawee Falls Area and the Wohn community in Margibi.
3. **Buchanan Office:** This office could serve the Barcoline Community and an additional site in Grand Bassa or eastern Margibi. This additional site would need to be identified.
4. **Voinjama Office:** This office could serve the sites in Lofa County. Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS

Additional information needs to be collected before a final determination on site selection is made. In the interim, the following recommendations are made for next steps and follow-up action:

1. To take advantage of economies of scale and existing projects and infrastructure in Nimba County, the Seyhi Clan of northern Nimba should be included in any final site selection. Pending USAID approval, PROSPER should initiate activities in the Seyhi community immediately.
2. At least one site needs to be selected that is within close proximity to Monrovia to utilize as a demonstration site. Both Barcoline in Grand Bassa and the Marshall Community near Monrovia have this potential. While Marshall could be supported from the Monrovia Office, the Barcoline site would require the establishment of a field office in Buchanan. Both the Barcoline and Marshall sites are attractive because of their focus on mangrove forests and conservation.
3. Additional information on the land tenure arrangements needs to be gathered to allow us to understand the complexity of the underlying land tenure rights in every one of the proposed sites. This is particularly true of the proposed sites in Lofa and Bong, and the Tapita site in Nimba (see land tenure discussions above). While the project cannot avoid working in sites where overlapping tenure claims and conflicts exist, at least one site should be relatively free and clear of competing land tenure interests.
4. An additional site (or sites) needs to be identified in Grand Bassa and/or eastern Margibi to determine the feasibility of a Buchanan Office.
5. An additional site(s) needs to be identified in Tapita to determine the feasibility of a Tapita Office
6. Land tenure rights and claims to the Kpatawee Falls need to be better understood before a

commitment is made to work in this area.

7. Land tenure rights including the location of FMC, TSC and PUPs in and around the proposed Lofa sites need to be better understood before a commitment is made to work in Lofa
8. PROSPER staff need to follow-up with the Wohn Community in Margibi district to assess their interest in PROSPER activities given ongoing discussions regarding the PUP.
9. PROSPER staff require guidance from USAID on the level of engagement possible with communities that have contracts for large-scale logging as in the Wohn Community.
10. PROSPER will only consider working in Marshall if the Barcoline Community is not selected as a site in Grand Bassa.

U.S. Agency for International Development

1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20523

Tel: (202) 712-0000

Fax: (202) 216-3524

www.usaid.gov