

GEF EO Terminal Evaluation – Project ID 92

1. PROJECT DATA					
GEF Project ID:		92	Review date:		1/2/2010
IA/EA Project ID:		P039787	GEF financing:		
Project Name:		Biodiversity Conservation Project (BCP)	at endorsement		at completion
Country:		Argentina	(Million US\$)		(Million US\$)
			10.1		9.84
			Government:		
			UA		6.97
			Other*:		
			UA		1.0
			Total Cofinancing		11.5
			Total Project Cost:		7.97
Operational Program:		Biodiversity (29% - P) Environmental policies and institutions (29% - P) Participation and civic engagement (28% - P) Land administration and management (14% - S)	21.6		17.81
IA		The World Bank	<u>Dates</u>		
Partners involved:			Effectiveness/ Prodoc Signature (i.e. date project began)		10/21/1997 (approved) 05/29/1998 (commenced)
			Closing Date	Proposed: 06/30/2006	Actual: 03/31/2008
Prepared by: Rajesh Koirala		Reviewed by:	Duration between effectiveness date and original closing (in months): 97	Duration between effectiveness date and actual closing (in months): 130	Difference between original and actual closing (in months): 33
Author of TE:			TE completion date: January 2009	TE submission date to GEF EO: UA January 2009	Difference between TE completion and submission date (in months): 0 months

* Other is referred to contributions mobilized for the project from other multilateral agencies, bilateral development cooperation agencies, NGOs, the private sector and beneficiaries.

2. SUMMARY OF PROJECT RATINGS AND KEY FINDINGS

Please refer to document GEF Office of Evaluation Guidelines for terminal evaluation reviews for further definitions of the ratings.

Performance Dimension	Last PIR	IA Terminal Evaluation	IA Evaluation Office evaluations or reviews	GEF EO
2.1a Project outcomes	MS	S	S	S
2.1b Sustainability of Outcomes	N/A	Negligible to Low risk	Negligible to low risk	L
2.1c Monitoring and evaluation	--		Substantial	S
2.1d Quality of implementation and Execution	NA	NA	Implementation –HS Execution- S	S
2.1e Quality of the evaluation report	N/A	N/A	S	S

2.2 Should the terminal evaluation report for this project be considered a good practice? Why? It is a good practice. The terminal evaluation (ICR) reports the extent to which the global environmental objective was achieved and important lessons learned.
2.3 Are there any evaluation findings that require follow-up, such as corruption, reallocation of GEF funds, mismanagement, etc.? The ICR has not reported incidence of such practices. A follow-up is not required.

3. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

3.1 Project Objectives

a. What were the Global Environmental Objectives of the project? Were there any changes during implementation?

The overall objective of the project, as mentioned in the Project Document (1997), was to conserve biodiversity of global importance. The document enlists following two specific objectives:

1. “Expand and diversify the existing National Protected Areas System (NPAS) to include several of the country’s most globally significant but inadequately protected ecoregions” and
2. “Create the conditions for their sustainable management through investments in institutional strengthening, refined mechanisms of consultation and participation, and improved biodiversity information management.”

According to the ICR, there was no alteration or modification in the global environmental objectives during implementation.

b. What were the Development Objectives of the project? Were there any changes during implementation? (describe and insert tick in appropriate box below, if yes at what level was the change approved (GEFSEC, IA or EA)?)

According to the Project Document, the project had four development objectives:

1. “Increased protection of biodiversity in ecoregions of global importance.”
2. “Promotion of sustainable use of biodiversity in areas adjacent to Protected Areas.”
3. “Increase public participation in the creation and protection of each Protected Area.”
4. “Increase access to biodiversity data.”

Based on the information available in the ICR, there was no change in development objective and project component during implementation. However,

Overall Environmental Objectives	Project Development Objectives	Project Components	Any other (specify)

c. If yes, tick applicable reasons for the change (in global environmental objectives and/or development objectives)

Original objectives not sufficiently articulated	Exogenous conditions changed, due to which a change in objectives was needed	Project was restructured because original objectives were over ambitious	Project was restructured because of lack of progress	Any other (specify)

4. GEF EVALUATION OFFICE ASSESSMENT OF OUTCOMES AND SUSTAINABILITY

4.1.1 Outcomes (Relevance can receive either a satisfactory rating or a unsatisfactory rating. For effectiveness and cost efficiency a six point scale 6= HS to 1 = HU will be used)

a. Relevance Rating: S

Based on the information provided in the Project Document, the outcomes of the project are relevant to the GEF focus and the country priorities.

The project is highly consistent with the GEF Operational Strategy for Biodiversity and with all four GEF Biodiversity Operational Programs. It also supports a key objective of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the in situ conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

The Government of Argentina has demonstrated a commitment to protecting biodiversity. The country is a signatory to a number of international conventions such as the Agreement on Wetlands of International Importance (RAMSAR, 1971); the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES, 1973); the Convention for Conservation of Migratory Species (1979); and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD, 1992). Also the government hosted the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in 1996. The project is fully consistent with one of the three pillars of the 1995 Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) for Argentina: rebuilding infrastructure (including addressing environment issues) by improving environmental management and protection. With a UNDP-administered GEF grant, the government finalized the national biodiversity strategy in 1996. APN

identified the key elements of the strategy incorporated them into the design of the Biodiversity Conservation Project (BCP). These elements include: (i) strengthening and extending the protected area system; (ii) increasing national and local capacity in natural resource management, both in forested and non-forested areas; and (iii) promoting greater public participation in natural resource management. The project also complemented to the objectives and outcomes of IBRD-financed Native Forests and Protected Areas Project (NFPA).

b. Effectiveness

Rating: S

According to the ICR, the major outcomes of the project include:

Establishment of National Parks: Five protected areas, comprising 391,464 ha of high priority ecosystems which harbors more than 300 different faunal species, are designated as national parks. National Parks are at the highest level of protection in Argentina. According to the ICR, the project fostered conditions that ensure sustainable management of these protected areas through full legal backing; adequate infrastructures (dormitories, visitors' centers, housing units, administrative offices, roads, vehicles and equipment); enthusiastic participation of local communities; and 67 administrative staff (rangers, fire fighters, and other staff).

Support to local livelihood: Total 21 sub projects focused on diversifying farming systems and improving livelihood. These projects included beekeeping, agriculture with native species, fruit and vegetable farming, rearing of small animals, production of photovoltaic energy, and eco-tourism services.

Increase awareness of natural resource conservation and sustainable use: Total 32 trainings involved support for the organization and institutional strengthening of local groups, the creation and management of producer associations, participatory resource management, and the identification and formulation of project proposals. The ICR states "some productive activities were developed in parallel with training events to ensure that residents had the knowledge as well as the resources to complete the work". To enhance scientific understanding, total 12 sub projects were launched, which covered research themes such as livestock production, surveys of exotic species, indigenous knowledge of flora and fauna, and water quality. Many of these research findings provide content for teaching material in universities.

Creation of Biodiversity Information System (BIS): According to the ICR, the BIS website contains 3,196 source documents; 227 maps; 458 species photographs; and information about 24,267 species, subspecies, and varieties of flora; 13,842 species of fauna; 2,081 of mushrooms; and 244 of bacteria and cyanophytes. It gets 75,000 visitors a year, proving it as a useful resource. The BIS has helped to increase institutional efficiency by improving the administration's planning and management of protected areas. To continue growth and development of the BIS, APN has 12 project staff who have sufficient technical know-how, and it is institutionalized. The ICR notes that the BIS is organized into five geographic nodes. Each is responsible for data entry and database management of regional information, and website management. The main (headquarters) node is of national scope and is overseen by the National Directorate of Conservation of Protected Areas in APN. The other four are of regional scope and are overseen by the four Regional Delegations: Patagonia, Central, Northwest (NOA), Northeast (NEA) and Casa Central (Headquarters). Each node possesses basic computer equipment for data entry (alphanumeric and spatial), processing, and dissemination of information through the BIS website. Each node has three technical specialists, one leader and two for data entry and GIS.

The project aimed at achieving four development objectives, and according to the ICR, almost all of the objectives surpassed the target levels set forth during the project preparation phase.

c. Efficiency (cost-effectiveness)

Rating: S

According to the ICR, the project brought 391,464 ha of ecosystems of global importance under national park system. It cost approximately US \$58 per ha (excluding land purchases it was only US \$43 per ha). As reported in the ICR, this cost indicates a highly efficient project compared to the establishment cost for forestry, which is US ~\$800 per ha, and establishment cost for agriculture, which is US ~\$300+per ha excluding land, maintenance, and harvesting costs, in Argentina.

The ICR also states that "BIS has increased the efficiency of APN, by making available of wide range of information on biodiversity and related issues, in many of its system planning and park management activities."

4.1.2 Impacts: summarize the achieved intended or unintended impacts of the project.

The success of the project encouraged the government to continue its effort on biodiversity conservation, and helped it secure funding for another biodiversity conservation project called Sustainable Natural Resource Management Project. Also, the establishment of protected area and conservation of the natural resources is very likely to improve local environment through soil protection, water quality and quantity regulation, and carbon sequestration.

4.2 Likelihood of sustainability. Using the following sustainability criteria, include an assessment of **risks** to sustainability of project outcomes and impacts based on the information presented in the TE. Use a four point scale (4= Likely (no or negligible risk); 3= Moderately Likely (low risk); 2= Moderately Unlikely (substantial risks) to 1= Unlikely (High risk)). The ratings should be given taking into account both the probability of a risk materializing and the anticipated magnitude of its effect on the continuance of project benefits.

a. Financial resources	Rating: L
<p>According to the terminal evaluation, GEF-financed protected areas have been integrated into APN, and they receive about US \$1.2 million annually from APN. An economic and financial study concluded that even though the GEF funded parks were not self-sustaining in a stand-alone form, their blending with the IBRD project and the formal incorporation of the parks into the APN system ensured their sustainability. The ICR mentions “APN has fully incorporated the parks into the protected area system, assigned personnel to manage them, and provided for their long-term financing. The 2008 APN budget has increased by AR\$40 million over the last year to AR\$131 million with important additions in field personnel and infrastructure investments.”</p> <p>The ICR states “Biodiversity Information System has its own annual budget and long-term plans that guarantee its sustainability.” For the local communities, the project supported in income generating activities such as bee keeping, vegetable farming, animal rearing, and so forth. As described in the ICR, these activities were in situations to yield continuous income to the communities.</p> <p>Overall the risks to financial sustainability appear to be low.</p>	
b. Socio political	Rating: L
<p>According to the ICR, national level political leadership is committed to strengthen the establishment and management of the protected area network in the country. Local community also has support to protected areas and buffer zones.</p>	
c. Institutional framework and governance	Rating: L
<p>According to the Project Document, the National Biodiversity Strategy prioritizes strengthening protected areas (PAs) and the National Park Law provides the legal basis for establishing and managing PAs. The Federal Strategic Plan for Sustainable Tourism considers PAs as key for economic development.</p> <p>APN has technical and institutional capacity to grow and develop the Biodiversity Information System, created by the project.</p>	
d. Environmental	Rating: L
<p>There seem to be no environmental risk.</p>	

4.3 Catalytic role

a. Production of a public good
<p>The ICR states that “the management and conservation of native forests and protected areas are the basis of significant economic activity and are the source of innumerable positive externalities which benefit the economy.” Five protected areas, encompassing 391,464 ha, are brought under full protection by the project and are designated as national parks. They contribute to ameliorate the local and regional environment by protecting biodiversity and supplying environmental goods and services, including water, soil and carbon.</p> <p>During the project implementation, 568 families living near the parks participated in 65 sub-projects, which were categorized in three themes: (i) sustainable production, (ii) applied studies, and (iii) training. This contributed to increase the knowledge, skill and abilities of local communities in areas related to those projects.</p>
b. Demonstration
<p>The project was not able to conduct demonstration activities.</p>
c. Replication
<p>The ICR mentions that the government of Argentina requested, aiming at replicating the lessons learned and continuing the achievements made by BCP, and obtained US \$60 million loan from the World Bank for a new IBRD project, Sustainable Natural Resource Management (SNRM). Moreover, to focus on rural corridors and biodiversity conservation in Patagonia and the Arid Chaco, discussions are underway between the GEF and the government. According to the ICR, “the new project is also underpinned by the UN Convention to Combat Desertification and its national level implementation or national action plan (NAP), and the components for biodiversity conservation of the new project are consistent with the National Biodiversity Strategy adopted in 2003 by the Secretary of Environment and Sustainable Development.”</p>
d. Scaling up
<p>As a result of improved national parks, according to the ICR, the government developed the Federal Strategic Plan for Sustainable Tourism (PEFTS) in 2005 to promote sustainable tourism. The plan considers national parks as key elements in conserving the natural resource base for sustainable economic development.</p>

4.4 Assessment of processes and factors affecting attainment of project outcomes and sustainability.

a. Co-financing.	<p>To what extent was the reported co-financing (or proposed co-financing) essential to achievement of GEF objectives? Were components supported by co-financing well integrated into the project? If there was a difference in the level of expected co-financing and actual co-financing, then what were the reasons for it? Did the extent of materialization of co-financing affect project’s outcomes and/or sustainability? If it did, then in what ways and through what causal linkages?</p>
<p>The ICR provides limited information on co-financing. It informs that the project received total US \$6.97 million co-financing from the government and beneficiary. Co-financing was used for all the three components of the project –</p>	

Protected Areas, BIS, and M&E. According to the ICR, the project had estimated cofinancing of US \$12.6 million at appraisal and an estimated materialization of US \$7.07 million. However, ICR does not inform on the causes and consequences of this difference. However it appears from the report that economic crisis the country faced might be a cause.
b. Delays. If there were delays in project implementation and completion, then what were the reasons for it? Did the delay affect the project's outcomes and/or sustainability? If it did, then in what ways and through what causal linkages?
There was a 21 month delay in project completion. The project was originally approved for an 8 year timeframe, but due to the impacts of political and economic crisis of 2001 – 2003 the project was completed in 9 years and 9 months. The ICR states that the crisis was unanticipated, and though it prolonged the duration of the project, it did not affect in the project outcome or their sustainability.
c. Country Ownership. Assess the extent to which country ownership has affected project outcomes and sustainability? Describe the ways in which it affected outcomes and sustainability highlighting the causal links.
Based on the evidence provided in the ICR, this review concludes that the national stakeholders of the project demonstrated sufficient ownership of the GEF project. For example, During the economic crisis, when the project was at high risk due to budget cut, Ministry of Economy and Production and the President's Chief of Cabinet provided additional funding to APN. Similarly, when the project financed a study to assess the threat of contamination from the mines and to determine the adequacy of both the mining company's EIA and monitoring program in the buffer zone of the San Guillermo Protected Area, the Secretary of Mining also followed up with the company and made recommendations for improvements to its EIA and mitigation efforts. The government's efforts to continue the project achievements also reflect its ownership of this project. To continue the achievement made by BCP, the government of Argentina requested and obtained US \$60 million loan from the Bank for a new IBRD project, Sustainable Natural Resource Management (SNRM). Moreover, the ICR discloses that, to focus on rural corridors and biodiversity conservation in Patagonia and the Arid Chaco, discussions are between the GEF and the government.

4.5 Assessment of the project's monitoring and evaluation system based on the information in the TE

a. M&E design at Entry	Rating (six point scale):	S
The M&E design incorporated the detail plan of by who, how, when it would be conducted. It included impact indicators for all four development objectives.		
b. M&E plan Implementation	Rating (six point scale):	S
According to the ICR, there was change in the key impact indicators: two of the initial indicators -- "social organization of affected families maintained/improved" and "development of more extensive BIS (Biodiversity Information System) determined by the creation and integration of additional information nodes" -- were formally dropped because the Bank and the Borrower agreed they were not necessary to measure key project impacts, and a third was expanded from "increased provincial presence in provincial reserves around federal PAs" to "increased federal and provincial presence in PAs and Provincial Reserves." As required by the M&E plan, the project implementation unit measured and updated information on performance indicators annually. According to the ICR when the supervision mission verified the sample of reported measurement, most indicators, except for species level indicators for biodiversity, were straightforward and were monitored easily. Three of the impact indicators specified in the original M&E plan. The species level indicators for biodiversity monitoring were established for all the new protected areas by closure.		
b.1 Was sufficient funding provided for M&E in the budget included in the project document?		
In all the documents available for this review, there is no mentioning of insufficient funding for M&E, which implies that the sufficient funding was provided.		
b.2a Was sufficient and timely funding provided for M&E during project implementation?		
The terminal evaluation does not indicate that there was insufficient or untimely funding for M&E.		
b.2b To what extent did the project monitoring system provided real time feed back? Was the information that was provided used effectively? What factors affected the use of information provided by the project monitoring system?		
The ICR states "the PSRs and ISRs were regularly updated with the monitoring and evaluation information, which proved to be a useful tool for the team in its supervision and to provide the needed feedback and guidance to the implementing agency on where to focus its efforts". Similarly some weaknesses found on financial and procurement management, partly due to lack of previous experience, were satisfactorily addressed by APN.		
b.3 Can the project M&E system (or an aspect of the project M&E system) be considered a good practice? If so, explain why.		
The ICR provides insufficient information to assess whether the M&E helped the project achieve its objectives.		

4.6 Assessment of Quality of Implementation and Execution

a. Overall Quality of Implementation and Execution (on a six point scale):	S
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b. Overall Quality of Implementation – for IA (on a six point scale):	S
Briefly describe and assess performance on issues such as quality of the project design, focus on results, adequacy of supervision inputs and processes, quality of risk management, candor and realism in supervision reporting, and suitability of the chosen executing agencies for project execution.	
<p>The ICR acknowledges that the implementing agency, the World Bank, facilitated in the project exceeding its targets. The project had also been selected for review of quality of supervision by the Quality Assurance Group of the World Bank in 2004. The review rated the project’s quality at entry as “highly satisfactory”. According to the ICR, the Bank team supervised the project in a satisfactory manner. Two task managers were involved in the project. The knowledge and experience of the team in dealing with similar projects in other parts of the world contributed to strengthen the project performance. Total 21 supervision missions were conducted throughout the project. During the project implementation, the financial specialists of the bank conducted five supervision missions, and each time they found the satisfactory performance of financial management and procurement issues. According to the ICR, some weaknesses identified during the missions were related to lack of timely funding from the counterparts, partly because of the 2001 – 2002 economic crisis and time differences between the counterpart funding, and lack of previous experience of the PIU dealing with international funding.</p> <p>Because of the economic crisis, when the counterpart resources were abruptly reduced, the Bank team played a “critical role” in preventing the project from failing. It assisted the executing agency to appeal for additional funding to other government agency, Ministry of Economy and Production and the President’s Chief of Cabinet, and also processed an amendment of original Bank agreement to increase the support. It increased the support for works from 88% to 100% and for equipment from 82% to 100%.</p>	
c. Quality of Execution – for Executing Agencies¹ (rating on a 6 point scale)	S
Briefly describe and assess performance on issues such as focus on results, adequacy of management inputs and processes, quality of risk management, and candor and realism in reporting by the executive agency.	
<p>The ICR reports that the PIU focused on results and outcomes of the project. It states “although the legal acquisition of San Luis Province, site of the proposed Los Venados National Park, was incomplete by closure, the project’s achievement on all four objectives exceeded the targets set forth during the project appraisal.”</p> <p>According to the ICR, government budget cut was imposed because of the economic crisis. However, with assistance from the Bank team, the agencies’ appeal for additional funding to the Ministry of Economy and Production and the President’s Chief of Cabinet was successful. The Bank also agreed to amend the grant agreement of GEF resources. The supervision missions by the Bank had identified weaknesses in procurement. These were rectified by the executing agency in a satisfactory manner.</p> <p>The project activities were in full compliance, as verified by the supervision missions during the implementation phase, with the Bank’s safeguard policies on Environmental Assessment (OP 4.01), Involuntary Resettlement (OP 4.12), and Natural Habitats (OP 4.04).</p>	

5. LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Assess the project lessons and recommendations as described in the TE

a. Briefly describe the key lessons, good practice or approaches mentioned in the terminal evaluation report that could have application for other GEF projects
<p>The ICR mentions four lessons learned from this project:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development is not a linear process, and processes need to be sufficiently flexible to adapt to changes on the ground. The ICR states “if the Bank, as an institution, ensures that its instruments, philosophy and approaches to development are flexible enough to adapt to the changing country conditions, while maintaining focus on the project development objectives, the project can produce highly relevant impacts even if the project experiences some setbacks, including delays and difficulties during implementation.” 2. The creation of a protected area needs to allocate sufficient time to ensure the participation of and coordination among a diverse spectrum of stakeholders (private land holders, intermediary agents, stakeholders, federal and provincial governments). 3. Local participation, generated through the consultative commissions, training events, validation workshops and sustainable use subprojects, proved to be a key tool for enhancing conservation and management of protected areas.

¹ Executing Agencies for this section would mean those agencies that are executing the project in the field. For any given project this will exclude Executing Agencies that are implementing the project under expanded opportunities – for projects approved under the expanded opportunities procedure the respective executing agency will be treated as an implementing agency.

4. The ICR argues that administrative processes should be agile and compatible with the capacity of beneficiaries and intermediary agents involved in sub-project activities. Most rural beneficiaries and some intermediary agents are not likely to have experience in funds management, administrative processes associated with sustainable use (buffer zone) activities need to be kept simple, for example, by avoiding co-mingling government and project funds.
b. Briefly describe the recommendations given in the terminal evaluation
The ICR recommends that monitoring and evaluation of biodiversity should be carried out at ecosystem levels. Biodiversity can be assessed at either the ecosystem or species or genetic levels, but at the ecosystem level, by using remote sensing surveys, habitat assessment for species is cheaper and easier. According to the ICR, because of the operational nature of GEF- and IBRD-financed projects, the use of highly detailed scientific studies is not always feasible. The use of ecosystem evaluations can help to determine the extent to which species are being protected. This can be a more practical approach than, for example, monitoring indicator species, which entails costly and difficult field surveys.
According to the ICR, project implementation arrangements should be sufficiently flexible and adopt special measures to guarantee participation of local populations that are not organized under formal charter organization and intermediary agents. By establishing seed funds and formulating sub-projects to address their needs, they could be attracted to participate in conservation.

6. QUALITY OF THE TERMINAL EVALUATION REPORT

6.1 Comments on the summary of project ratings and terminal evaluation findings based on other information sources such as GEF EO field visits, other evaluations, etc.

NA

Provide a number rating 1-6 to each criterion based on: Highly Satisfactory = 6, Satisfactory = 5, Moderately Satisfactory = 4, Moderately Unsatisfactory = 3, Unsatisfactory = 2, and Highly Unsatisfactory = 1. Please refer to document GEF Office of Evaluation Guidelines for terminal evaluations review for further definitions of the ratings. Please briefly explain each rating.

6.2 Quality of the terminal evaluation report	Ratings
a. To what extent does the report contain an assessment of relevant outcomes and impacts of the project and the achievement of the objectives? The report presents a thorough discussion on outcomes of the project objectives. Annexes contain information on outputs by project components for each national park. Sustainable development activities carried out in buffer zones are presented with details on budget, beneficiaries, implementing agency, and major results achieved. It also elaborates all 24 indicators' original, revised and actually achieved targets. Arguments are substantiated with facts and examples.	HS
b. To what extent the report is internally consistent, the evidence is complete/convincing and the IA ratings have been substantiated? Are there any major evidence gaps? The report is consistent; the evidence is convincing.	S
c. To what extent does the report properly assess project sustainability and /or a project exit strategy? There is detail information and thorough discussion assessing project sustainability.	HS
d. To what extent are the lessons learned supported by the evidence presented and are they comprehensive? Lessons are supported by the evidence and they are comprehensive.	S
e. Does the report include the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used? The report contains project costs (appraisal estimate, revised estimate and actual) by components and financing source. However it omits a discussion on significance of co-financing for the project to achieve its objectives.	MS
f. Assess the quality of the reports evaluation of project M&E systems? The report describes M&E at design, implementation and utilization, but it hardly touches on the significance of M&E to achieve the project outcomes	S

7. SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR THE PRERATATION OF THE TERMINAL EVALUATION REVIEW REPORT EXCLUDING PIRs, TERMINAL EVALUATIONS, PAD.