



*Comisionado
Nacional de
Derechos
Humanos*



global witness

Independent Forest Monitoring Pilot Project Honduras

Mission report No. 009

Mission of the Independent Monitor (CONADEH – Global Witness)

Mission to an Annual Operational Plan in a municipal forest

Annual Operational Plan No.:	J-4-214/2005
Management Plan No.:	BE-JO4-004-95-II
Management Plan Name:	Coyoles (Salamá)
Owner:	Municipality of Salamá
Location:	Salamá UEP, Olancho Forest Region

Mission date: 11 and 12 January 2006

Report date: 26 January 2006

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 11 and 12 January 2006, AFE-COHDEFOR¹ and the Independent Monitor carried out a joint mission to Annual Operational Plan (AOP) No. J-4-214/2005, from management plan no. BE-JO4-004-95-II, located in the municipal forest area known as 'Coyoles', in Salamá UEP², Olancho Forest Region.

The mission was carried out as part of the *Independent Forest Monitoring (IFM) Pilot Project*, currently being implemented in the country. There were no reported problems or obstacles for the implementation of the mission.

The conclusions of the Independent Monitor regarding this mission are:

1. The harvesting of the AOP No. J-4-214/2005 has been done with a conservative approach, cutting less timber than authorised. For example, trees with an only slightly higher diameter than 30 cm (the minimum authorised for logging) were not cut. Neither were trees located in steeper areas (given their role in the prevention of soil erosion), even when they were marked for harvesting. Furthermore, in logging unit 1 those trees located in a newly established protection area surrounding a water course (which was not planned in the original AOP) were not cut either. This area was established after a consensus was reached amongst AFE-COHDEFOR, the cooperative 'Primero de Mayo' and MAO³.
2. The estimate of the harvested volume according to the stumps inventory coincides with the total volume extracted according to all the transport permits used, which indicates that there has been a correct use of such permits by the Municipality of Salamá and the cooperative 'Primero de Mayo'.
3. During the harvesting, the limits of the protected areas, as well as the boundaries of the AOP, have been respected.
4. As stated in the AOP, some preventive and erosion control measures have been carried out (such as soil barriers and spread of residuals on the tracks), although their efficacy is questionable according to some of the participants in the mission.
5. There are cows and horses in the AOP area, which threatens the ongoing regeneration of the forest, especially if the land user plans to burn the area in order to allow pasture to regenerate.

¹ State Forest Administration – Honduran Corporation of Forest Development (*Administración Forestal del Estado – Corporación Hondureña de Desarrollo Forestal*).

² Projects Implementation Unit (*Unidad Ejecutora de Proyectos*).

³ Environmental Movement of Olancho (*Movimiento Ambientalista de Olancho*)

6. As described in IFM Report No. 008, there are questions about the actual role of the cooperative 'Primero de Mayo' regarding the management of this operational plan, and, according to FEHCAFOR⁴, there is also uncertainty on the legitimacy of the current Board of Directors of the cooperative. The fact that this harvesting has been made correctly must not lessen the importance of these underlying issues, which clarification remains fundamental.

Considering these conclusions, the Independent Monitor recommends:

1. The municipality of Salamá should approach the user of the site and agree on an elimination or reduction of the grazing activities, especially the use of burning as a practice to promote the regeneration of pasture. Considering the income the municipality of Salamá has got with the sale of the timber in this operational plan (more than Lps. 500,000 according to the sales and purchase contract established with the cooperative 'Primero de Mayo'), the municipality could also assess the possibility of compensating the user for the loss or revenues derived from such activities.
2. Considering the conflict surrounding this AOP and the concerns expressed about the preventive and erosion control measures, the Independent Monitor reiterates conclusion no. 4 of field mission report No. 008, which recommends that an independent environmental impact assessment of the harvesting operations currently underway is carried out. This assessment should be done by an institution with recognised experience and credibility in this field. Furthermore, should any harvesting be carried out in the future - after a revision of the management plan which complies with the results of the Salamá Land Management Plan (see point 9 below) - it would be essential to introduce and apply low impact harvesting systems (for example, where possible, gravity cable logging or the extraction of timber with ox), thus avoiding the use of heavy machinery in the forest.
3. Analogously, the Independent Monitor reiterates the importance of the following conclusions from report No. 008:
 - Conclusion no. 5: IHDECOOP⁵, with the support of FEHCAFOR if necessary, should carry out the relevant investigations about potential abuses in the management of the cooperative 'Primero de Mayo'.
 - Conclusion no. 8: governmental and non-governmental authorities (Olancho Departmental Government, Accounting High Court, AMHON⁶, etc.) should demand Mr. José Ramón Ramos, as mayor of Salamá in the period 2002- 2006, the presentation of a clear report providing details

⁴ Honduran Federation of Agroforestry Cooperatives (*Federación Hondureña de Cooperativas Agroforestales*).

⁵ Honduran Institute of Cooperatives (*Instituto Hondureño de Cooperativas*).

⁶ Association of Honduran Municipalities (*Asociación de Municipios de Honduras*).

- about these revenues or, failing that, that they undertake the relevant investigations.
- Conclusion No. 9: all the signatories of the Agreement Act of 15 August 2005, and particularly to AFE-COHDEFOR as the institution in charge of the forest sector, should comply with what was agreed in such Act. This included the non-authorisation of new harvesting activities for this management plan until the Salamá Land Management Plan is finalised and the management plan is consequently reviewed.

2. COMPOSITION OF THE MISSION

First day (11 January 2006):

- Onil Cerrato, Head of Salamá UEP, AFE-COHDEFOR
- Eliud Donaire, forester, AFE-COHDEFOR
- Fredy Valladares, cooperative “Primero de Mayo”
- Juan Carlos _____, member, cooperative “Primero de Mayo”
- Olga Murillo, environmentalist, MAO
- Rosminda Gradis, environmentalist, MAO
- Macario Zelaya, environmentalist, MAO
- Felipe Lanza, environmentalist, MAO
- Edelviz Lanza, environmentalist, MAO
- Hector Valdéz, forester, Caritas
- Fausto Mejía Zelaya, Independent Forest Monitoring team, CONADEH⁷
- Filippo Del Gatto, Independent Forest Monitoring team, Global Witness

Second day (12 January 2006):

- Onil Cerrato, Head of Salamá UEP, AFE-COHDEFOR
- Eliud Donaire, forester, AFE-COHDEFOR
- Fredy Valladares, cooperative “Primero de Mayo”
- Juan Carlos _____, member, Cooperativa “Primero de Mayo”
- _____, member, Cooperativa “Primero de Mayo”
- Olga Murillo, environmentalist, MAO
- Rosminda Gradis, environmentalist, MAO
- Macario Zelaya, environmentalist, MAO
- Laurin Lanza, environmentalist, MAO
- Carlos Felipe Lanza, environmentalist, MAO
- Hector Valdéz, forester, Caritas
- Fausto Mejía Zelaya, Independent Forest Monitoring team, CONADEH
- Filippo Del Gatto, Independent Forest Monitoring team, Global Witness

3. CONSTRAINTS

There were no problems or obstacles during the implementation of the mission.

⁷ Honduran Commission for Human Rights (*Comisionado Nacional de Derechos Humanos*).

4. RESULTS

4.1 General overview of the area and the work carried out

Annual Operacional Plan (AOP) No. J-4-214/2005 concerns an area of 97.42ha, with 3,029 pine trees (*Pinus spp.*) to harvest, which should amount to a net volume of 2,810.46 m³. This is the first AOP that is harvested in management plan no. BE-JO4-004-95-II, located in the municipal land area known as 'Coyoles', in Salamá UEP, Olancho Forest Regions.

Since 2005, this management plan and its related operational plan have been the centre of a serious social conflict with wide national and international echo (for more information, see IFM mission report No. 008). Considering this conflict and the subsequent attention being paid to this operational plan, the IFM mission focused on a meticulous assessment of the harvesting made on this site until 11 and 12 January 2006. To this end, the work aimed at carrying out a thorough inventory of stumps in the four logging units. Furthermore, the limits of the AOP were checked and progress on the measures for erosion control assessed.

The mission was carried out as part of the *Independent Forest Monitoring (IFM) Pilot Project*, currently being implemented in the country. It was the first joint mission carried out between AFE-COHDEFOR and the Independent Monitor in 2006.

Before starting the fieldwork, the mission met with Onil Cerrato (Head of Salamá UEP), directors of the cooperative 'Primero de Mayo' and members of MAO to jointly coordinate fieldwork.

4.2 Main findings

a) *Assessment of the amount of timber harvested in the four logging units*

Table 1 reports on each logging unit providing the following information: (i) number of trees authorised for harvesting, (ii) number of trees to be cut for sanitation, and (iii) number of trees effectively logged (according to the inventory of stumps). As can be noted, in all logging units the amount of trees logged is not only significantly lower than (i) + (ii), but also lower than the number of authorised trees (i).

Table 1. Comparison between the number of trees authorised according to the Annual Operational Plan and the number of trees effectively cut.

Logging Unit	Area (ha.)	(i) Number of trees to harvest	(ii) Number of trees to be cut for sanitation	Sum (i) + (ii)	(iii) Number of trees cut
1	35.41	1,143	110	1,253	941
2	22.28	754	103	857	585
3	15.52	591	57	648	463
4	24.41	541	75	616	386
		3,029	345	3,374	2,375

Source: Annual Operational Plan J-4-214/2005 and inventory of stumps.

Harvesting operations were already finished in logging units 1, 2 and 3, while in logging unit number 4 operations were still underway, and surveying works had been concluded. Therefore, the data reported on table 1 can be considered as final harvesting data for this AOP. In summary, it can be concluded that the harvesting has been done with a conservative approach, cutting less timber than authorised. For example, trees with an only slightly higher diameter than 30 cm (the minimum authorised for logging) were not cut. Neither were trees located in steeper areas (given their role in the prevention of soil erosion), even when they were marked for harvesting. Furthermore, in logging unit 1 those trees located in a newly established protection area surrounding a water course (which was not planned in the original AOP) were not cut either. This area was established after a consensus was reached amongst AFE-COHDEFOR, the cooperative 'Primer de Mayo' and MAO⁸.

b) Comparison between the extracted volume and the transport permits used

Table 2 compares the total volume extracted according to the inventory of stumps (estimated from statistical results of the operational inventory contained in the AOP) with the total volume extracted according to the sum of all transport permits used until 12 January 2006.

The difference is insignificant (2.8%) and can be justified by the error margins that both estimates have.

Table 2. Comparison between extracted volume and transport permits used

(i) Total volume extracted according to the inventory of stumps (m ³)	(ii) Total volume extracted according to transport permits used (m ³)	Difference (ii) - (-) (m ³ y %)
Approx. 2,457.00	2,525.93	68.93 (+2.8%)

⁸ Environmental Movement of Olancho (*Movimiento Ambientalista de Olancho*)

c) *Boundaries of the AOP*

In order to carry out a thorough inventory of stumps, all the area of the operational plan was covered by foot. During this activity the boundaries of the four logging units were checked. It was concluded that these had been respected, both in terms of the protection areas established and the external boundaries of the operational plan.

Furthermore, in logging unit 1 the limits of a new protected area were respected. This area was established in August 2005, as a result of a joint mission carried out amongst AFE-COHDEFOR, the cooperative 'Primero de Mayo' and MAO (see section 'a').

d) *Preventive and erosion control measures*

As stated above, when the mission was implemented all the harvesting operations had already concluded in logging units 1, 2 and 3. It was verified that, as established in the AOP, preventive and erosion control measures had been done in all of them, such as soil barriers and spreading the residuals on the track (see Picture 1).

Although the execution of such measures is a positive aspect, some of the people participating on the mission expressed concerns about their efficacy to reduce soil erosion caused by water (as it leaks through and around barriers and eventually removes the residuals).

Picture 1. Residuals spread on a track



e) *Grazing*

During the mission, the presence of cows and horses in logging units of the operational plan was confirmed (see Pictures 2 and 3). This clearly represents a threat to the regeneration of pines.

Furthermore, the presence of cattle implies the possibility that the user of the area plans to use fire as a practice to allow pasture regeneration. This could be potentially very harming not only for the regeneration of the forest but also for younger pine trees already growing in several areas of the AOP.

Pictures 2 and 3. Cattle grazing in the logging units.



It is worth mentioning that article 73 of the Agriculture Modernisation Law⁹ establishes that it is the responsibility of the land owner (in this case the municipality of Salamá) to 'regenerate and establish a new forest in the harvested area in a period not exceeding two years after the logging has taken place'.

Where this premise has been breached, the land owner loses its rights to continue to harvest in the following years (article 38 of the Regulation, Title VI – Forest Aspects of the Agriculture Modernisation Law¹⁰). Furthermore, according to article 16 of the Regulation of fines and sanctions related to forest legislation¹¹, the owner will be sanctioned with a 'fine equivalent to 50% of the cost of reforestation, without prejudice of AFE using the warranty deposit to carry out reforestation activities'.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions of the Independent Monitor regarding this mission are:

1. The harvesting of the AOP No. J-4-214/2005 has been done with a conservative approach, cutting less timber than authorised. For example, trees with an only slightly higher diameter than 30 cm (the minimum authorised for logging) were not cut. Neither were trees located in steeper

⁹ Ley para la Modernización y el Desarrollo del Sector Agrícola (Decreto No. 31-92).

¹⁰ Reglamento al Título VI – Aspectos Forestales del Decreto No. 31-92 (Acuerdo No. 1039-93).

¹¹ Reglamento para la Aplicación y Cobro de Multas y Sanciones por Incumplimiento de la Legislación Forestal (Acuerdo No. 1088-93).

- areas (given their role in the prevention of soil erosion), even when they were marked for harvesting. Furthermore, in logging unit 1 those trees located in a newly established protection area surrounding a water course (which was not planned in the original AOP) were not cut either. This area was established after a consensus was reached amongst AFE-COHDEFOR, the cooperative 'Primero de Mayo' and MAO¹².
2. The estimate of the harvested volume according to the stumps inventory coincides with the total volume extracted according to all the transport permits used, which indicates that there has been a correct use of such permits by the Municipality of Salamá and the cooperative 'Primero de Mayo'.
 3. During the harvesting, the limits of the protected areas, as well as the boundaries of the AOP, have been respected.
 4. As stated in the AOP, some preventive and erosion control measures have been carried out (such as soil barriers and spread of residuals on the tracks), although their efficacy is questionable according to some of the participants in the mission.
 5. There are cows and horses in the AOP, which threatens the ongoing regeneration of the forest, especially if the land user plans to burn the area in order to allow pasture to regenerate.
 6. As described in IFM Report No. 008, there are questions about the actual role of the cooperative 'Primero de Mayo' regarding the management of this operational plan, and, according to FEHCAFOR¹³, there is also uncertainty on the legitimacy of the current Board of Directors of the organisation. The fact that this harvesting has been made correctly must not lessen the importance of these underlying issues, which clarification remains fundamental.

Considering these conclusions, the Independent Monitor recommends:

1. The municipality of Salamá should approach the user of the site and agree on an elimination or reduction of the grazing activities, especially the use of burning as a practice to promote the regeneration of pasture. Considering the income the municipality of Salamá has got with the sale of the timber in this operational plan (more than Lps. 500,000 according to the sales and purchase contract established with the cooperative 'Primero de Mayo'), the municipality could also assess the possibility of

¹² Environmental Movement of Olancho (*Movimiento Ambientalista de Olancho*)

¹³ Honduran Federation of Agroforestry Cooperatives (*Federación Hondureña de Cooperativas Agroforestales*).

compensating the user for the loss or revenues derived from such activities.

2. Considering the conflict surrounding this AOP and the concerns expressed about the preventive and erosion control measures, the Independent Monitor reiterates conclusion no. 4 of field mission report No. 008, which recommends that an independent environmental impact assessment of the harvesting operations currently underway is carried out. This assessment should be done by an institution with recognised experience and credibility in this field. Furthermore, should any harvesting be carried out in the future - after a revision of the management plan which complies with the results of the Salamá Land Management Plan (see point 9 below) - it would be essential to introduce and apply low impact harvesting systems (for example, where possible, gravity cable logging or the extraction of timber with ox), thus avoiding the use of heavy machinery in the forest.
3. Analogously, the Independent Monitor reiterates the importance of the following conclusions from report No. 008:
 - Conclusion no. 5: IHDECOOP¹⁴, with the support of FEHCAFOR if necessary, should carry out the relevant investigations about potential abuses in the management of the cooperative 'Primero de Mayo'.
 - Conclusion no. 8: governmental and non-governmental authorities (Olancho Departmental Government, Accounting High Court, AMHON¹⁵, etc.) should demand Mr. José Ramón Ramos, as mayor of Salamá in the period 2002- 2006, the presentation of a clear report providing details about these revenues or, failing that, that they undertake the relevant investigations.
 - Conclusion No. 9: all the signatories of the Agreement Act of 15 August 2005, and particularly to AFE-COHDEFOR as the institution in charge of the forest sector, should comply with what was agreed in such Act. This included the non-authorisation of new harvesting activities for this management plan until the Salamá Land Management Plan is finalised and the management plan is consequently reviewed.

¹⁴ Honduran Institute of Cooperatives (*Instituto Hondureño de Cooperativas*).

¹⁵ Association of Honduran Municipalities (*Asociación de Municipios de Honduras*).