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Great Ape Conservation Fund Evaluation of the USAID CARPE Funding Transfer

USFWS Contract 982108C107

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ACRONYMS

ABC	Friends of the Bonobos of the Congo (Les Amis des Bonobos due Congo)
AfGAP	African Great Apes Programme
AFR	Bureau for Africa (USAID)
AWF	African Wildlife Foundation
BCI	Bonobo Conservation Initiative
CAR	Central African Republic
CARPE	Central African Regional Program for the Environment
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBFP	Congo Basin Forest Partnership
CBNRM	Community-Based Natural Resources Management
CBO	Community Based Organization
CEFDHAC	Conférence sur les Ecosystèmes de Forêts Denses et Humides d’Afrique Centrale
CEFRECOF	Centre de Formation et de Recherche en Conservation Forestière
CI	Conservation International
CIB	Congolais Industrielle du Bois
CIFOR	Center for International Forestry Research
CIRMF	Centre International de Recherches Médicales de Franceville
CITES	Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Species
COMIFAC	Commission on the Forests of Central Africa
CTO	Cognizant Technical Officer
DFID	Department for International Development
DFGFI	Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International
DGEF	Direction Générale de l’Economie Forestière
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECOFACT	Conservation and Rational Use of Forest Ecosystems in Central Africa Program (Conservation et Utilisation Rationnelle des Ecosystèmes Forestiers d’Afrique Centrale)
EU	European Union
FAA	Foreign Assistance Act
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FFI	Flora and Fauna International
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
FWS	US Fish and Wildlife Service -- see also USFWS
FY	Fiscal year
GACF	USFWS Great Ape Conservation Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GFTN	Global Forestry Trade Network
GFW	Global Forest Watch
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
GPS	Global Positioning System
GRASP	Great Ape Survival Partnership
GTZ	German Technical Agency / Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische

	Zusammenarbeit
HR	US House of Representatives
ICCF	International Conservation Caucus Foundation
ICCN	Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature
IGCP	International Gorilla Conservation Programme
IMAP	Information Management and Analysis Project
INCEF	International Conservation and Education Fund
ITTO	International Tropical Timber Organization
IUCN	The World Conservation Union
JGI	Jane Goodall Institute
LAGA	The Last Great Ape Organization
LEM	Law Enforcement Monitoring
MIKE	Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants
MINFOF	Ministry of Forestry (Cameroon)
MGVP	Mountain Gorilla Veterinary Project
MOV	Means of Verification
NASA/UMD	National Aeronautics and Space Administration/University of Maryland
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NRM	Natural Resources Management
OCAT	Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool
OES	International Environment, and Scientific Affairs
ORTPN	Office Rwandais du Tourisme et des Parcs Nationaux
PA	Protected Areas
PASA	Participating Agency Service Agreement
PASA	Pan African Sanctuary Alliance
PN	Parc National
PNAE	Plan National d'Action Environnemental
PNCD	Parc National de Conkouati-Douli
PNNN	Parc National de Nouabalé-Ndoki
PNOK	Parc National d'Odzala-Koukoua
PROGEPP	Projet de Gestion des Ecosystèmes Périphériques du Parc
RAPAC	Réseau des Aires Protégées d'Afrique Centrale
RCTL	Réserve Communautaire du Lac Télé
REBAC	Central African Botanist Network
REDD	Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation
RNL	Réserve Naturelle de Lossi (Sanctuaire de gorilles de Lossi)
ROC	Republic of Congo
RSSA	Resources Support Service Agreement
SAP	WWF Species Action Plan
SEGC	Station D'Etudes des Gorilles et Chimpanzees
SOF	State of the Forest Report
SOW	Statement of Work
TCCB	Tayna Center for Conservation of Biology
TL2	Tshuapa-Lomami-Lualaba region of DRC
TNS	Tri-Nationale de la Sangha

TRIDOM	The Dja-Minkebe-Odzala Tri-National
UGADEC	Union of Associations for the Conservation of Gorillas and Community Development of the Eastern DRC
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNF	United Nations Foundation
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USFS	US Forest Service
USFWS	US Fish and Wildlife Service
USG	United States Government
UWA	Uganda Wildlife Authority
WCS	Wildlife Conservation Society
WRI	World Resources Institute
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature/World Wildlife Fund (US)
WWF CARPO	WWF Central Africa Regional Programme Office - Yaoundé
ZSL	Zoological Society of London

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With global biodiversity under threat and in recognition of an unprecedented international decline of certain charismatic species, the U.S. Congress established the Multinational Species Conservation Funds, which are dedicated to saving some of the world's fastest disappearing and most treasured animals in their natural habitats. The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) administers these funds through the Wildlife Without Borders Species Programs (WWB), awarding grants to efforts aimed at conserving globally-valued endangered species found outside U.S. borders. Through its Division of International Conservation, the USFWS implements one such small grant program to support organizations involved in the conservation of great ape species worldwide. These grants comprise the Great Ape Conservation Fund (GACF) grant program as authorized by law through the Great Ape Conservation Act of 2000.

Much of the world's great ape habitat is found in the environmentally critical forests of Central Africa where U.S. government (USG) presence is minimal. To address the importance of conservation in the region, the US Secretary of State Colin Powell in 2002 spearheaded a multinational multi-agency support effort that resulted in the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP). Most of the United States government (USG) support to the CBFP is channeled through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE). Under specific appropriation language, a portion of USAID funds in support of the CBFP are transferred under autonomous management to the USFWS GACF where they support great ape survival and habitat conservation in the region. Most grants are directed to the dozen critical landscapes identified as biodiversity hotspots that also receive most of USAID's CARPE funds. This document provides an external evaluation of the portion of the GACF that was funded by USAID and implemented by the USFWS in support of the CBFP and CARPE.

The USAID funded GACP grants began in Fiscal Year (FY) 2006 and expanded an existing portfolio of Great Ape projects. In FY 2007 Congressional appropriation to the Department of Interior Fish and Wildlife Service of \$1.4 million to the Great Apes Conservation Fund for the Africa regions was augmented by \$2.5 Million transferred from USAID's Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment. This additional transfer of funds has continued annually as stipulated by appropriation language under annual interagency memoranda of understanding. These additional funds complement other CBFP and CARPE activities and support ape conservation in seven Central African countries: Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic and Rwanda. USFWS awards GACF grants to a broad range of partners for activities including applied research, surveys, monitoring, wildlife health, strengthening law enforcement, conservation education, and habitat protection to strengthen conservation efforts of the great ape species of the region.

Since USAID does not directly manage these funds and because the transferred funds are intended to complement CARPE core funding and program goals, USAID requested, and the FWS agreed to, in the interagency FY08 memorandum of agreement, an external evaluation to assess and better understand this complementary effort. From inception of the first FY06 funds of the transfer through FY 09, grant funding of over \$9.6 million allowed USFWS to leverage \$10.3 million in additional matching and in-kind funds to support 106 CARPE-linked projects.

The evaluation results presented in this document thus cover four years and, with recipient matches, approximately \$20.0 million of funding. Future funds transfers may be used more broadly to support conservation in the region, but the lessons learned here should be generally applicable. This report contains findings, conclusions and recommendations for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the GACF.

Key Findings

The GACF/CARPE grant portfolio represents an investment approach that emphasizes collaboration over “ownership.” Grants are strongly oriented toward direct action at the field level and are driven by demand from partners and potential partners. The species focus builds upon and enhances the capacities of a community of conservation professionals and staffs whose programs provide longer term continuity to USFWS targeted short duration grant support. The staff managing the GACF is actively engaged in professional relationships and networks involving other government and foundation donors, affiliations of practitioners such as the IUCN specialist groups, and with grant implementers and stakeholders in the field. This hands-on approach gives the program a distinctive character and trajectory. Personal and professional interaction with recipients fosters an awareness and sense of community between USFWS staffs, grantees, and other institutions and funders. Frequently, recipients reapply to the GACF to obtain either intermittent or continuous funding over a series of grant cycles. Newer and smaller organizations come to the attention of the Service and are urged to apply.

The result after four years of funding under the transfer mechanism is a diverse portfolio of 106 ongoing or completed grants spanning six countries in the Central African region: Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Central African Republic, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Gabon. As with USAID CARPE funds, the USFWS grants are targeted to the specific CARPE landscapes¹. The grants span a range of themes broken down by the evaluation into the following categories:

- Monitoring and Applied Research,
- Critical Habitat Protection

¹ Throughout this report, the region’s landscapes are referred to as CARPE landscapes. This follows common usage among CARPE landscape partners, many USAID staff, USFWS program managers and reflects the evaluation SOW. Strictly speaking, these are CBFP landscapes, and USAID CARPE simply adopted them as the principal on-the-ground conservation focus areas in the CARPE Strategic Plan as instructed by State Department. The individual 11 CBFP landscapes were determined, according to the NGO led Congo Basin Initiative (CBI) concept paper submitted to the State Department in June 2002, through a technical regional process facilitated by Central African experts and COMIFAC. The CBI reflected the best available science in identifying critical habitat within the basin. In part, it stems from the learning phase of CARPE and earlier FWS grants to the NGOs. The CBFP "adopted" these landscapes as the core of the USG program, and with limited exception both USAID and USFWS transfer funding follow the CBFP guidance. Recently, the Central African governments have begun to accept the landscape model of conservation. A mid-term evaluation of CARPE (Pielemeier *et al*, 2006) found the original 11 landscapes useful but unnecessarily limiting. Some landscape boundaries have been modified, and COMIFAC states and conservation partners having been working on similar issues outside these landscapes. The evaluation team used a comparative methodology to examine transfer and non-transfer funded grants both inside and outside core landscapes in the Central African and Albertine Rift regions of great ape habitat.

- Species Recovery and Health
- Governance and Enforcement
- Conservation Outreach and Education
- Training/Capacity Building/Technical Assistance
- Strategic Planning/Best Practices Development and Dissemination
- Fostering Innovative Opportunities

Through GACF, USFWS has provided significant funding to CARPE’s landscape model of conservation and done so in a manner that largely complements, not duplicates, the USAID/CARPE funding. USFWS grant partners appreciated direct funding and argue that the amounts reaching the field between the two agencies are often of similar importance and order of magnitude. USFWS funding enhances the total pool of leveraged funding to CARPE by providing additional matching resources for conservation in the Congo Basin.

The GACF program is more than just a limited collection of unrelated small grants. Taken together, these grants have leveraged not just direct matching funds from partner funds and other foundations. There is field-based evidence that USFWS investments have indirectly leveraged other large donor conservation “infrastructure” projects (such as ECOFAC and CARPE who support core office, staff and facility funding) throughout Central Africa. Based on the grantees’ ability to adapt funding to these varied contexts, USFWS appropriately funds single (one-off), clustered and sequential grant-making strategies to affect conservation outcomes.

To illustrate this approach, consider just the single sector of “training and capacity building,” which relies on sharing expert knowledge, and technical assistance is often the method is use to deploy such information. The GACF provides technical assistance in two main ways. First, it does so through grants to support technical expertise within NGOs, and governments or through individuals/consultants. Second, the USFWS does so through deploying its own highly qualified technical staff. The professional personnel of USFWS and its WWB Species and Regional Programs are an asset that is highly valued by the great ape conservation community and GACF grantees. By using its own capacity, the USFWS is contributing to the mission of great ape conservation through substantial non-monetary assistance to its grantees. This non-monetary assistance includes both management-oriented and field-related assistance. Some examples of USFWS staff inputs includes strategic planning advice; the development of performance measures; the facilitation of collaboration; providing expertise on addressing specific field conservation challenges; and sharing research and best practices.

Key Conclusions

The GACF program in Central Africa has evolved steadily to a point where a stronger institutional presence in the region and across grants is merited. In view of the GACF’s limited resources, even with the USAID/CARPE transfer, an expanded institutional role has greater likelihood of success if it is part of an overall coordinated effort of the broader Wildlife Without Borders program. Among USG agencies, USFWS appears best-placed to administer conservation species-focused grants for great ape species and species’ habitat in Central Africa.

Traditionally, the USFWS has relied upon targeted small grants to respond to emerging wildlife conservation needs. While recognizing that these grants serve a strategic purpose, there is awareness within USFWS that the agency should play a greater role in leading wildlife conservation initiatives. USFWS through its Wildlife Without Borders program is currently moving toward a model emphasizing the development of proactive, multi-stakeholder initiatives that address key wildlife management challenges. This new programmatic direction is consistent with our observations that the USFWS is well placed to play a more significant role in working directly with key institutions, including African government wildlife agencies and civil society groups to shape conservation programs.

Independent of CARPE, USFWS is established in Central Africa. If CARPE funding changes priorities or stops, USFWS, as a permanent government agency with a long-term mandate, can be expected to sustain at least some support, thus a long-term strategy should anticipate the maturing and phase-out of the 20-year CARPE effort.

The USFWS GACF presence in the Congo Basin is strategic, but lacks a formal strategy. The absence of an explicit strategy guiding the fund created unnecessary concern and confusion among grantees, USAID and other stakeholders. The USFWS Great Ape Conservation Fund could foster the development of a coherent and coordinated Great Ape Conservation Strategy across all scales of implementation for local site-based efforts to national and regional levels of activity throughout the Congo Basin. Additionally, USFWS GACF lacks explicitly structured processes that would ensure adequate levels of communication between the fund and USAID CARPE management in the field. As new personnel within both agencies continue their support to CBFP, the communication has weakened to a level that undercuts potential efficiency and effectiveness at the operational level in landscapes.

Based on the operational successes of the grants and the perceived complementarity of USAID and USFWS field activities in support of CBFP, efforts to improve communication and collaboration between them are warranted. Programs funded by each enhance the results of the other.

Administrative burdens need to be lightened. Having grants database and technical management separate from administrative and financial functions leads to inefficiencies in fund management such as in working with USAID to ensure more timely transfer of funds. With grantees, communicating ideas clearly and succinctly is a critical function of a proposal or a report and this should be fostered through more precision in the proposal and reporting process. Greater precision in proposal and report writing will assist USFWS in the review of proposed efforts and outcomes delivered. Greater precision in proposal and report design can also assist the USFWS in archiving and retrieving data with a timeliness that allows the GACF to serve as an important conservation database for Great Apes.

In the field, the grant program is having a positive impact. Despite their relatively small scale and low profile to date, the USFWS CARPE grants are critical to enabling conservation partners to meet important conservation objectives. Because of their heterogeneity, there is no easy set of metrics with which to quantify impact. Even grant size is not an indication of grant success as

many small grants given by the GACF have yielded highly leveraged outcomes; successful conservation outcomes often result from a partner's larger, ongoing conservation efforts to which the grants make significant, sometimes critical contributions.

By focusing grants, USFWS is capable of taking a strategic lead and core donor role for limited periods in selected landscapes. Where USFWS funds a substantial number of grants within a landscape, USFWS, along with partners, has the potential to proactively develop its own thematic or landscape level great ape program strategy. These "priority" programs could be distinguished from GACF (CARPE) general grants that could also continue as part of the program. Priority programs could evolve over time and help grants lead to measurable longer term conservation outcomes. While not specifically spelled out as a strategy, many grants already follow this pattern

Key Recommendations

Great ape conservation is a long term endeavor that will require continuing advocacy of US government support for great ape species conservation programs. The USFWS is the most important bilateral government funding effort that specifically targets the conservation of great ape species. The GACF, if nothing else, serves as an example of how one nation can choose a more proactive approach to change the trajectory of conservation events.

Increase involvement of national governments in GACF program. Expand existing initiatives to develop a proactive approach to capacity building, particularly of national staffs, that leads toward direct government to government grants.

USFWS needs to develop an updated and comprehensive Great Ape conservation strategy to guide its grant making activities. Strategic planning should include stakeholder engagement and employ the best available science. The USFWS Great Ape strategy should be periodically revised to reflect the dynamic challenges facing Great Ape conservation on the ground.

USFWS should establish an information and communication strategy that 1) builds networks within the Great Ape conservation and donor community; 2) shares results across these stakeholder groups; 3) profiles grant activities and field programs; 4) communicates strategic priorities and information about the GACF; and 5) makes outreach material available to the general public through the internet and other media.

USAID and USFWS should agree on formal information sharing procedures and expand informal ad hoc communications. Systematic sharing of programming prioritization and synopsis of grant awards should be communicated regularly to CARPE/Kinshasa (and other concerned USAID operating units).

USAID and USFWS should clarify the geographic and species requirements for future funding under a biodiversity funds transfer. If the scope of the transfer is expanded many of the CARPE specific recommendations and findings in this report could be applied to improving collaboration and coordination in other parts of Africa where both agencies play a role. This coordination could also be instructive to other federal agencies involved in African biodiversity conservation.

USAID/CARPE should endeavor to use an improved understanding of the GACF grant operations and results to improve its own management of the land use planning efforts in each of the affected landscapes. By benefiting from USFWS coordination and management of the grants and the range of activities they are able to support could offset what are perceived as lost resources allocated to the USFWS program administration. USAID generally could support this improvement by accelerating annual memoranda guiding the transfer and, to the degree practical, actual transfer of the funds.

USFWS should play an explicit and proactive role in convening stakeholders around Great Ape Conservation Act (GACA) (and related) conservation objectives. USFWS needs to expand its interactional donor role, which would be helped by adding staff and improving internal coordination between GACF program and administrative functions. As a hub of Great Ape Conservation in the Congo Basin, USFWS, beyond making grants, can enable cross-fertilization of ideas; devise initiatives that synthesize findings and best practices; and develop efforts that advance policy, resourcing, science and capacity building across the entire range of Great Ape conservation.

Establish substantive and geographic priorities for grants. For example, in the short term, pull back from broad support to ecotourism to focus on higher potential sites where investment in habituation programs is a precondition to a viable higher value tourism market.

USFWS should produce a revised format for grantee submissions and reporting that link grants to other strategic GA conservation priorities including CARPE, where appropriate. This would improve funding decisions where applicants can show how grant funding would link to larger conservation results. An explicit strategic framework for USFWS grant objectives would help. Streamline and standardize reporting formats. All proposal submissions and reports should focus on brevity and have fixed page lengths in set page margins, font and type size. The USFWS should facilitate a process of making online submissions.

The team recommends that USFWS consider recruiting an evaluation/knowledge management specialist (one FTE). A specialized staff person could assist Species Fund Program Officers in reviewing reports as a collective across several species funds. Such a position can be augmented with contractual assignments to analyze grants data and develop synthesis review assessments.

The evaluation team strongly recommends a strategic planning exercise for the GACF that includes partners such as USAID, other governmental agencies, international donors and external great ape conservation expertise. The USFWS has begun to put into place an advisory group for Great Apes as with the other multinational species funds that will provide strategic guidance to the program. Building on this effort, the USFWS may also seek to consult with the National Academy of Science in developing a strategy using the best science and elevating the profile of great ape conservation in the process. In the end, the USFWS needs a strategy and related sharing of information that should be posted on its web page and be accessible to the public.

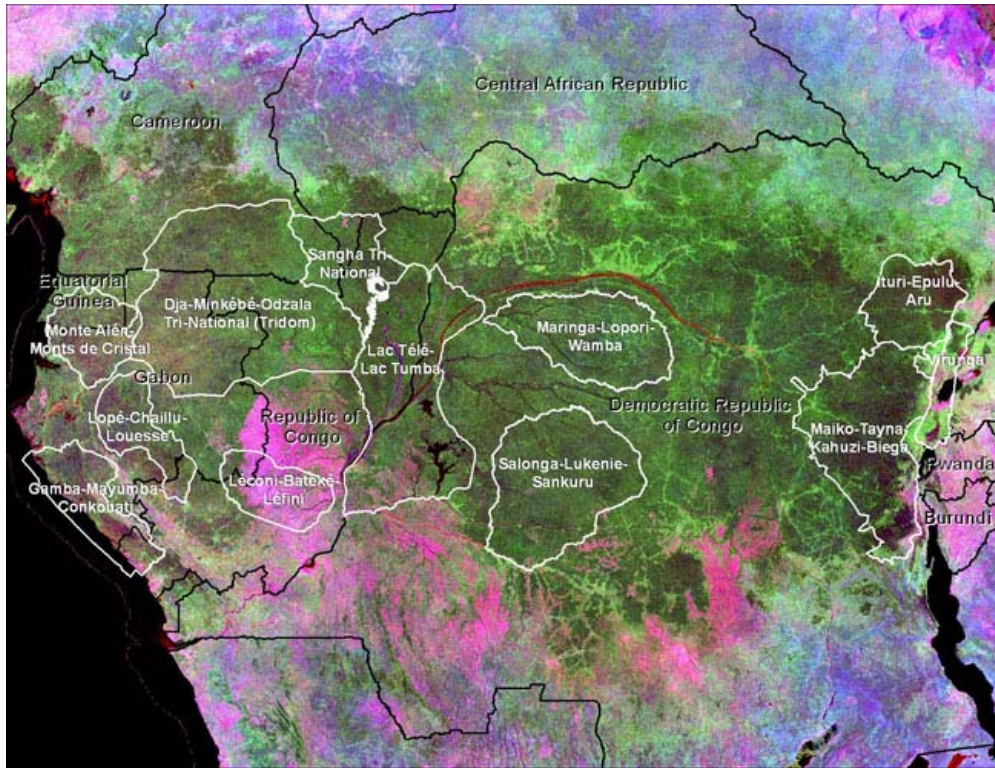
2. INTRODUCTION

Through its Division of International Conservation, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) implements a grant program to support organizations involved in the conservation of great ape species worldwide. These grants comprise the Great Ape Conservation Fund (GACF) grant program as authorized by the Great Ape Conservation Act of 2000. The GACF was created in response to US citizen and government concern for the many threats jeopardizing the survival of great apes. USAID is directed under its appropriation to transfer additional funds to, the Fish and Wildlife Service for work that has been dedicated specifically to the Congo Basin. The funding constitutes a part of the US government's commitment to the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP). Most of the United States government (USG) support to the CBFP is channeled through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE). A portion of the CARPE funds are transferred from USAID to the USFWS for direct administration of an expanded GACF program. This document provides an external evaluation of the portion of the GACF that was funded by USAID and implemented by the USFWS in support of the CBFP and CARPE.

Under the umbrella of its Wildlife Without Borders program, the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Division of International Affairs (DIC) administers a range of related conservation grant facilities, including the Great Ape Conservation Fund. FWS awards GACF grants to a broad range of partners for activities including applied research, surveys, monitoring, infectious diseases, strengthening law enforcement, conservation education, and habitat protection to strengthen conservation efforts of all great ape species.

CARPE represents USAID's major conservation program in Central Africa and is USAID's largest field-based conservation program. USAID launched CARPE as a 20 year program in 1995. The current phase of the initiative, CARPE II, which provides funds to the GACF, started in January, 2003 and continues until September, 2011. A third phase is anticipated. The USFWS Division of International Conservation has been involved in all phases of CARPE. CARPE activities encompass nine countries with the strategic objective of reducing the rate of forest degradation and loss of biodiversity through increased local, national and regional natural resource management². Programs are focused around 12 core landscapes where critical biodiversity is concentrated. These landscapes, centered on biodiversity "hotspots" frequently coincide with important and often threatened great ape habitat.

² CARPE is currently working within the following African countries: Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Sao Tome & Principe. Following from their original "Yaoundé Declaration" (1999), the governments in the region have established their willingness to create a meaningful regional forest dialogue by becoming members of the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC).



The USAID-funded FWS Congo Basin grants began in Fiscal Year (FY) 2006 and expanded earlier grant efforts. In FY 2007 Congressional appropriation to DOI FWS of \$1.4 million to the Great Apes Conservation Fund was augmented by \$2.5 million transferred from USAID's Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment. This additional transfer of funds has continued annually as stipulated by USAID appropriation language and managed under an interagency memorandum of understanding. These additional funds complement other CARPE activities and support ape conservation in seven Central African countries: Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic and Rwanda. The funds are available for CBFP countries to support great ape-related conservation projects in CARPE landscapes.

The transfer of \$2.5 million from USAID CARPE has occurred annually from FY06-FY09 and may continue in future years. For FY 2010, there is no specific appropriation but the Conference report provides a directive that “\$5,000,000 is for international programs of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, particularly in central Africa”. Because the USAID does not directly manage these funds and the funds are intended to complement CARPE program goals, in the FY08 memorandum of agreement with USAID, USAID requested and provided for an external evaluation as part of this complementary effort. Through FY09, CARPE GACF grant funding of over \$9.6 million allowed FWS to leverage \$10.3 million in additional matching and in-kind funds to support 106 projects under the CARPE transfer mechanism. The results of that evaluation presented in this document thus cover four years and approximately \$20.0 million of funding. As this document goes to press, the nature and scope of this funds transfer has expanded beyond a unique focus on CARPE and great apes. While this revised mandate is beyond the purview of this evaluation, it is anticipated that the evaluation findings and lessons will be of

value to the continued collaboration between USAID and the USFWS as well as to the Great Ape program beyond the geographic limits of CARPE.

2.1 The Congo Basin and Great Apes – species, distribution, importance, and relevance to US interests

The forest ecosystems of the Congo basin span across much of Central Africa, from the Atlantic Ocean's Gulf of Guinea to the mountains of the Albertine Rift in the east. Encompassing over 180 million hectares, they constitute the world's second largest remaining area of contiguous moist tropical forest. The Congo basin forests do not only play a critical role for global biodiversity conservation and, in so doing, provide a home to three of the world's four species of great apes; they also supply vital local, regional and global ecological and social services. The region's forest contribute to controlling and buffering climate at a regional scale and absorbing and storing atmospheric carbon dioxide, and thereby help to mitigate global climate change. More than 60 million people live in the region and the forests afford food, shelter and livelihoods for many of the region's people. About half of the region targeted by CARPE is under forestry concessions, making productive forest use central to the region's economy.

While much of the forest area remains intact, the regional forest ecosystems are at risk from a complex set of important threats - such as unsustainable timber and mineral extraction, transport infrastructure and settlement, bush meat trade and weak governance - that call for concerted global action. Deforestation trends and other threats to the forest are increasing in the region and, if unchecked, will ultimately negatively impact the development potential of the region.

Most countries in the region remain fragile, many having suffered from war and large displacements of their populations since the CARPE and GACF programs began. However, the governments of the Congo Basin have recognized the threat to their forests and through the 1999 Yaoundé Declaration and the ensuing Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC), are taking action to sustainably benefit from and mitigate threats to the region's forests and biologically diverse resources.

Great Apes are a valued part of our human heritage and their conservation is a global responsibility. Human development at a global scale has far-reaching impacts and the pressures of expanding populations, resources consumption, pollution, climate change and economic growth compel the global community toward concerted international efforts to save these species. The USFWS is mandated through a series of laws and international treaties (e.g. the Endangered Species Act, CITES) to play a key role in protecting global biodiversity and particular species of international concern. The Great Ape Conservation Act is one of a series of acts to support this role. As one of several Multinational Species Conservation Funds, the GACF supports conservation of critical flagship species such as Great Apes and Africa Elephants in their natural habitats. Through its Wildlife Without Borders Program, the USFWS uses these GACF funds to work with partners in the field to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife and plants in their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

According to program managers, "the Multinational Species Funds are helping to make a real difference." Citing successes such as with the status of rhinos in Nepal, elephants and rhinos in southern Africa, and tigers in Russia, the USFWS, asserts that, "these successes show that endangered animal populations can recover if sufficient and reliable resources are provided for

anti-poaching patrols, habitat conservation, public education and other interventions.”³ In recent testimony to Congress, the Service asserts that these successes are being achieved and merit continued support under GACA as well: “The Great Ape Conservation Act provides an excellent example of how to produce focused and efficient means to support the conservation of species that are ecologically important and aesthetically invaluable to the American public and people around the world,” said Jane Lyder, the Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Department of the Interior in her testimony before the Congressional panel. “The Administration strongly supports H.R. 4416.” Our evaluation seeks to test the validity of this assertion with respect to the conservation impact of the Congo Basin grants.

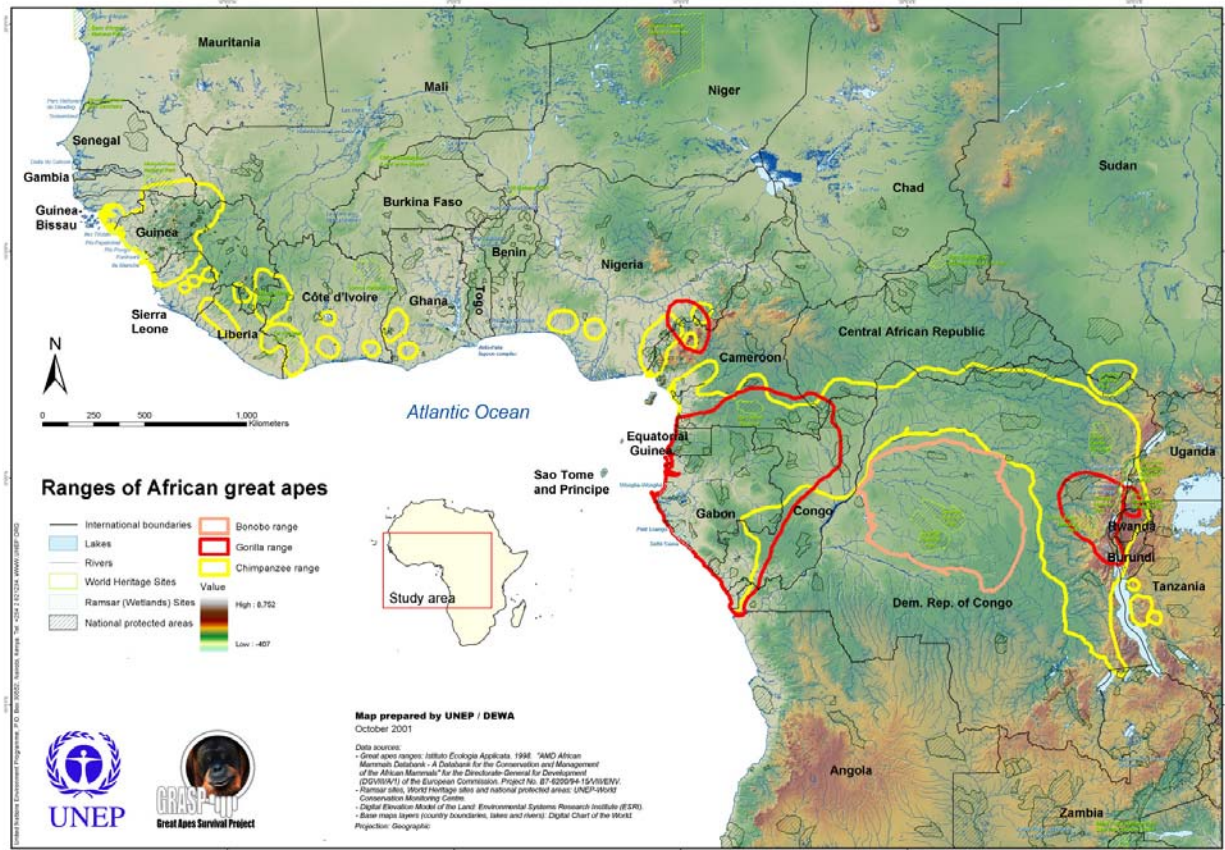
2.1.1 Great Apes Species

There are four species of great apes in Africa: bonobo, chimpanzee, eastern gorilla, and western gorilla -- all of them key landscape species within the Congo Basin. All four of these great ape species are classified as endangered or critically endangered. The conservation status of all species is precarious. Their survival in the wild hinges on guaranteeing that widespread human impacts in the region such as habitat loss and degradation, civil conflict, bushmeat and live animal trade and epizoonotic disease are diminished. For instance, African great apes are especially threatened by Ebola Hemorrhagic Fever outbreaks. In areas where great ape ecotourism exists and where ape and people have high rates of contact, there is also concern for higher levels of respiratory and gastrointestinal pathogen transmission between apes and people.

Great apes are keystone species and play a critical ecological role as seed dispersers. In some regions, they are vital to human economic livelihoods and national pride and contribute external revenues through high profile ecotourism. Across all of Africa, great ape populations are under enormous pressure from human-generated threats and, as a result, are in decline. Great apes have slow reproductive rates which are further reduced in the face of disturbance. Ape populations take a long time for to recovery from any impact. Because most populations are now small and dispersed, destruction of their forest habitats and hunting are rapidly driving great apes towards extinction in the wild (Caldecott and Miles 2005, Ellis, Christina 2008 WWF Netherlands).

³ See USFWS brochure, Multinational Species Conservation Funds

Figure 1: Range Map of Africa's Great Apes from UNEP GRASP



The great ape populations in Africa are estimated below.

Table 1: Africa Great Ape Populations and Red List Status
(From Caldecott and Miles 2005; Ellis, Christina 2008)

Taxon	Pop. Estimate	IUCN Status
Species: Bonobo (<i>Pan paniscus</i>)	10,000 – 50,000	EN
Species: Chimpanzee (<i>Pan troglodytes</i>)	172,700 – 299,700	EN
- Subspecies Western chimpanzee (<i>P. t. verus</i>)	21,000 – 56,000	EN
- Subspecies Cam-Nig chimpanzee (<i>P.t. vellerosus</i>)	4,000 – 7,000	EN
- Subspecies Central chimpanzee (<i>P. t. troglodytes</i>)	47,000 – 78,000	EN
- Subspecies Eastern chimpanzee (<i>P.t. schweinfurthii</i>)	76,400 – 119,600	EN
Species: Western gorilla (<i>Gorilla gorilla</i>)	94,500 – 110,000 <175 000	CR
- Subspecies Cross River gorilla (<i>G.g. diehli</i>)	<280	CR
- Subspecies Western lowland gorilla (<i>G.g. gorilla</i>)	94,500 – 110,000 <175 000	CR
Species: Eastern gorilla (<i>Gorilla beringei</i>)	3,650 – 5,700	EN
- Subspecies Mountain gorilla (<i>G.b. beringei</i>)	720	CR
- Subspecies Eastern lowland gorilla (<i>G.b. graueri</i>)	3,000 - 5,000	EN

Species Descriptions:

Bonobo (*Pan paniscus*)

The bonobo is restricted south of the Congo River, a biogeographic barrier and do not live within the range of any other great ape. Bonobos are endemic to the Democratic Republic of Congo, and are found at elevations between 300 – 750 meters. Bonobos are very patchily distributed throughout a 350,000 km² range and mainly exist outside of protected areas. Total population estimates, based on speculation, vary widely between 10 000 – 50 000. (Caldecott and Miles 2005; Ellis, Christina 2008)

Chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*)

Chimpanzees have the largest range in Africa covering 21 countries from East to West Africa. Four subspecies are recognized: the West African chimpanzee *Pan troglodytes verus*; the Cameroon-Nigeria chimpanzee *Pan troglodytes vellerosus*; the central chimpanzee *Pan troglodytes troglodytes*; and the eastern chimpanzee *Pan troglodytes schweinfurthii*. Chimpanzees are found in savannah woodlands, grassland forest mosaic and tropical moist forests, from sea level to about 3000m elevation. The minimum population estimate is just under 200,000 individuals. In Ivory Coast, chimpanzees' numbers have declined by 90% from estimated 100,000 individuals in the 1960s to 8,000 to 12,000 today (Campbell et al. 2008).

Western Gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla*)

The western gorilla is found in seven countries in western Central Africa, and inhabits lowland forest, swamp forest and montane forest from sea level to 1600 meters. The Congo and Oubangui Rivers limit the eastern edge of their distribution and the northern boundary is defined by the Sanaga River and northern extent of tropical forest habitat. The western gorilla is found in Cameroon, Central African Republic, mainland Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Nigeria, Republic of Congo, and Cabinda (Angola). Western gorillas are thought to be extinct in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Caldecott and Miles 2005; Ellis, Christina 2008).

There are two subspecies of western gorilla -- the Cross River Gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla diehli*) and the Western lowland gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla gorilla*).

The Cross River gorilla is considered the most critically endangered gorilla in Africa with a population estimated at less than 300 individuals spread across 12-13 small patches of habitat in the Western Highland region along the Nigeria-Cameroon border along the Cross River.

The Western lowland gorilla is the most numerous and widespread gorilla, and is distributed across approximately 700,000km² of Congo Basin habitat up to 1600 meters. Western lowland gorillas live sympatrically with the central subspecies of chimpanzee.

Eastern Gorilla (*Gorilla beringei*)

Separated from western gorillas by about 900km of Congo Basin forest, eastern gorillas inhabit submontane and montane forests in eastern Central Africa. There are two subspecies of Eastern Gorilla -- the Eastern lowland gorilla (*Gorilla beringei graueri*) and Mountain gorilla (*Gorilla beringei beringei*).

The Eastern lowland gorilla (*Gorilla beringei graueri*) has a patchy distribution within eastern Democratic Republic of Congo from Lake Edward south to Lake Tanganyika and exists in less than 13% of its original range. Population surveys have proved difficult given decades of civil unrest and the region's remoteness. Census data estimates range from 3,000 to 17,000 individuals. Population baseline estimates often rely on Hall et al. survey published in 1998.

The Mountain gorilla (*Gorilla beringei beringei*) occurs in two known populations within three countries that converge at the Nile River-Congo River divide: the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda. These two populations exist almost entirely within National Parks. One population of 380 individuals is found within a tri-national park area (425 km²) formed by the extinct volcanoes of the Virunga Massif and protected within Virunga National Park in Democratic Republic of Congo, in Volcanoes National Park in Rwanda and Mgahinga Gorilla National Park in Uganda. The second population of Mountain gorillas is found mainly in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park (215 km²), Uganda and has roughly 340 individuals in size. The Virungas and Bwindi are separated by 25 kilometers of intensely cultivated farmland. (Caldecott and Miles 2005; Ellis, Christina 2008)

2.2 Evaluation Purpose

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the effectiveness of the Great Ape Conservation Fund as a delivery mechanism for great ape conservation as well as the effectiveness of GACF at achieving USG CBFP conservation objectives in Cameroon, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Rwanda. The evaluation is jointly supported by USAID and the USFWS and involved participation of both agencies. The mid-term evaluation of CARPE II recommended that federal agencies retained under CARPE funding should “earn” their place at the table by offering comparative advantages in the delivery of services. Since the fund transfer to USFWS reduced USAID funds without

clear oversight mechanisms, USAID entered this mandated transfer arrangement with some uncertainty about the role and functioning of the USAID-supported GACF/CARPE grants. This external evaluation is intended to address USAID's concerns.

Specifically the evaluation will assess the process by which these grants are administered via a transfer of funds from USAID to USFWS, examine transaction costs of this process, and determine any vulnerabilities or duplication of efforts which may exist as a result of this process. The evaluation will also assess the impact of USAID funding via the GACF on ape conservation and provide recommendations for improving program delivery, appropriate metrics for evaluating ongoing program performance, and assist in the development of appropriate short and long term program objectives. Although the evaluation included site visits, the purpose was not to capture the full impact and results at selected sites but to document illustrative impacts achieved through the small grants program. Furthermore, the evaluation will provide recommendations to improve the Fund's performance

2.2.1 Evaluation Structure

The team evaluated three primary dimensions of the grant program—two related to process and the third related to outcomes—of the transfer of funds from USAID to the USFWS. The process sections include functioning of the interagency transfer mechanism and the operational capacity and experience of the USFWS as a grant-making organization.

I. Effectiveness and Efficiency of GACF as a CBFP Small Grant Delivery Mechanism

The Statement of Work (SOW) calls for the examination of the transfer mechanism and specifically to an assessment of the coordination between USFWS and USAID. Congress established the parameters for this transfer; the evaluation examines the programmatic context and implications of the transfer. Questions guiding this section of the evaluation include:

- What was Congress' original motivation in creating this transfer mechanism, and how well is its intent being served by implementation of the fund to date?
- How enabling and/or restricting is the GACA legislation? What is the implication of transferring regional program funding to a species-based program?
- Was there an NGO role in structuring the Act and the fund?
- What is the current capacity of USAID CARPE's own grants facility now generally implemented via the IUCN? Is there overlap between USAID and GACF/CARPE grants? Comparative advantages of each?
- What are GACF reporting requirements to CARPE (if any)?
- What distinction is there between GACF support to CBFP vs. support to CARPE in terms of fund-transfer structuring? Why was USAID not given direct administration of the grant funds or more direct management of the USAID funds involved in the interagency transfer?

II. Grants Management Process

The SOW guidance asks the team to assess the validity of underlying assumptions of the Fund's strategic process and to evaluate the grant-award process in terms of partner selection, size and number of grants, and the management of coordination between FWS and USAID.

Representative evaluation questions included:

- What specific criteria have been developed for GACF/CARPE grants proposal review (beyond the general guidance contained in the Act)?
- Who participates in the review of grants?
- What is the timing and length of the grant cycle? Are grants for a single year or multiple years?
- What avenues exist for the grantor to negotiate with potential grantees (and vice versa) to improve clarity, success, relevance etc?
- Are multiple grant proposals from a single organization “bundled”?
- Is there a systematic process for grant monitoring and assessment? If so, what is the effect on renewals?
- On what basis (strategic, tactical, opportunistic) does FWS determine the scale and funding levels of individual grants? Does the current practice seem to be optimal?
- On what basis can success/failure be judged? Can objective metrics such as population levels of species be used to assess grantee submissions and reporting? What are current practices for judging success? .

III. Grantee Performance in Achieving of Conservation Objectives

The SOW guidance asks the team to evaluate effectiveness of GACF/USAID funding to achieve great ape conservation and to evaluate effectiveness of GACF in contributing to CBFP objectives. The evaluation documents great ape conservation results from grants in impacts at least 10 sites in four countries through the Fund and spillover effects (at sites, in country, and within organizations). Representative evaluation questions which may arise include:

- How do grantees define and report leveraged funds? To what extent would these funds exist in the absence of the GACF grant?
- Attitudes and knowledge – how do we assess “soft” (e.g. raising awareness) versus “hard” grants (e.g. scientific inventories)?
- What requirements for measuring performance and impact exist and who defines and uses these measures?
- How can conservation change which is inherently long-term be measured for short, one or possibly two-year grants?
- What can be concluded about the validity of measurement? What approaches are appropriate for tracking and assessing differing types and scales of grant?

- What is the value from tracking and reporting information relative to the costs in acquiring this information? What are the best roles for formal measurement versus informal checking on progress, dialog and “participatory” partnering?
- Where are grants located? What is the rationale in terms of achieving GACA, CBFP, and CARPE objectives?

IV. Strategic Support

In a recent modification to the contract USFWS expanded the SOW and extended the evaluation period to include additional responsibilities in supporting the GACF/CARPE initiative to produce 1) strategy recommendations based upon congressional intent, existing strategy documents, other great ape funding mechanisms, and findings from the evaluation, for consideration by the USFWS in developing a strategic plan for Great Apes in the Congo Basin and to produce 2) a draft US Fish and Wildlife Great Ape Conservation outreach and communications plan for the Congo Basin. In addition to addressing the core evaluation questions above, the team will interview key personnel and gather data that will enhance the quality of these additional outputs.

3. METHODOLOGY AND EVALUATION PROCEDURES

3.1 Evaluation Methodology

The four evaluation phases include:

- Pre-implementation and planning phase
- Data collection and fieldwork
- Data analysis and report preparation
- Presentation and dissemination of results

Each of these phases is briefly described below. In addition to these evaluation phases, the contract was modified to enable more detailed fieldwork and wider geographic coverage. This expanded scope also included provision for a role in assisting the GACF to develop an explicit strategy to guide management and stakeholders toward improved functioning and stronger conservation impacts. This strategy input is submitted separately from the body of the report, but is included in the accompanying timeline. The overall approach to the evaluation was participatory and the timeline reflects inputs from USFWS and USAID. (See Annex 6)

3.1.1 Pre-implementation and planning phase

Evaluations often begin without adequate preparation and suffer a subsequent decline in quality. To establish a basis for shared understanding of the nature of the task and subsequent consensus building around the results and specific recommendations, we began this phase with a systematic *team planning meeting* (TPM). The TPM is primarily an internal exercise in which the evaluation team reviews the tasks and deliverables called for in the statement of work. The result of the TPM is an initial evaluation design that is responsive to the evaluation purpose and includes a blueprint for answering each of the evaluation questions. In this evaluation, we were concerned with potential administrative time requirements for implementing a grantee/stakeholder survey, and thus initiated design of this data collection instrument and associated paperwork for approval with expectation that this would facilitate timeliness of subsequent phases. The administrative burden for the survey eventually required that its implementation shift to the GACF to be acted on subsequent to the evaluation and thus is not reported on herein.

The team prepared an agenda and brought USFWS and USAID stakeholders together for a one day meeting to clarify objective and expectations, review detailed questions from the SOW, establish document and interview lists, and establish a timeline. For example, the SOW called for an assessment of grant effectiveness but asked for recommendations on efficiency. The workshop clarified and stressed the relative importance to FWS in examining results or effectiveness versus efficiency or cost expended to obtain the results. A work plan or implementation plan is the culmination of this phase.

3.1.2 Data Collection and Fieldwork Phase

The SOW called for field case studies to document selective impacts. As a team we felt the field case studies would offer one of the richest but most costly sources of data for the evaluation.

Since our participatory approach included the USFWS GACF Program Officer as a team member, the evaluation team combined administrative visits with more classic field data collection tools. In each instance we were careful to differentiate, administrative from data collection meetings and separated when appropriate. This also provided the evaluation team with instances where direct observation of the grant management process would otherwise not have been possible. The use of direct observation was equally important in assessing the grant review process in Washington.

Both in Washington and in the Congo Basin, we used a range of different collection approaches including small group interviews, key informant meeting, document review, and direct participation with field partners in their sites.

3.1.3 Data Analysis and Report Preparation

Since the period of the evaluation was extended to include two additional field visits, the team prepared a partial, mid-course summary of findings and made an internal presentation to USFWS and USAID stakeholders. These findings are incorporated into the final report. Subsequent to the second field visit, the team consolidated field data with information gathered in Washington and through phone interviews to prepare a complete draft report for review. When possible, the team triangulated data from multiple sources to reinforce key findings, conclusions and recommendations. Where the team offered more speculative observations and suggestions, they are qualified as such. Upon review of the report by USFWS and USAID, the team incorporated comments and produced a final document. The field data were organized to establish findings and align those with conclusions and recommendations that logically follow.

3.1.4 Presentation and Dissemination of Results

The SOW called for a presentation to FWS and USAID as well as a presentation to Washington stakeholders. An initial presentation was made as part of the USAID forestry and biodiversity seminar series. A second presentation follows the approval of the final document. The presentation materials consist of these two PowerPoint presentations as well as the evaluation report itself.

3.1.5 Supplementary Evaluation Products

As noted the work extended beyond the initial scope to include additional complements to the core evaluation. These include a document providing suggested guidance to the GACF to prepare an explicit strategy, guidelines for an improved strategy, an assemblage of existing grant-related strategy documents from other donors and sources including some receiving GACF funding, an expanded listing of existing and potential grant sources to complement GACF funds, and *de facto* the online survey instrument and associated package of support materials for OMB approval.

3.1.6 The Evaluation Team

The external team was complemented by USFWS and USAID staff participation, review and comments. The external consultant profiles are summarized below:

Dr. Frederick Sowers is a natural resources geographer with over 25 years of experience and is an expert in bringing together stakeholders from public and private sector institutions around common development goals focused on wildlife natural resource management, land use, and crop production. In the 1990's, Dr. Sowers served as Technical Director for a USAID global program assessment of agency efforts to protect biological diversity. Dr. Sowers continues to lead sensitive internal and external assessments and evaluations of complex development programs with multiple stakeholders in conservation programs, especially those in Africa. Recently, he was key staff in the 2005-2006 CARPE mid-term evaluation. He also led or worked on wildlife related evaluations in Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Malawi, Madagascar, Niger, and elsewhere outside of Africa, often involving multiple countries and donors.

Dr. Gary Tabor has nearly 20 years of grant evaluation experience with a unique background working with private philanthropy and multi-lateral and bi-lateral donor governmental agencies. His experience includes organizational, programmatic and scientific technical reviews of over 500 non-governmental organizations both large NGOs and universities through 16 years of work with Geraldine Rockefeller Dodge Foundation, Henry P. Kendall Foundation, Wilburforce Foundation, Turner Foundation, Rockefeller Philanthropic Associates, and Consultative Group on Biological Diversity. In addition, Dr. Tabor has experience in design and evaluation with GEF, UNDP, USAID, DANCED, and SIDA. Dr. Tabor is co-founder of one the largest transboundary conservation efforts in the world, the Yellowstone to Yukon effort. He also has extensive African wildlife experience having worked in Africa for seven years primarily with the Wildlife Conservation Society (Uganda Director), African Wildlife Foundation (Regional Senior Program Officer), and Cornell University. He designed the Bwindi/Impenetrable and Mgahinga Mountain Gorilla Conservation Trust for the World Bank and GEF – the first GEF conservation trust in Africa.

4. EVALUATION FINDINGS

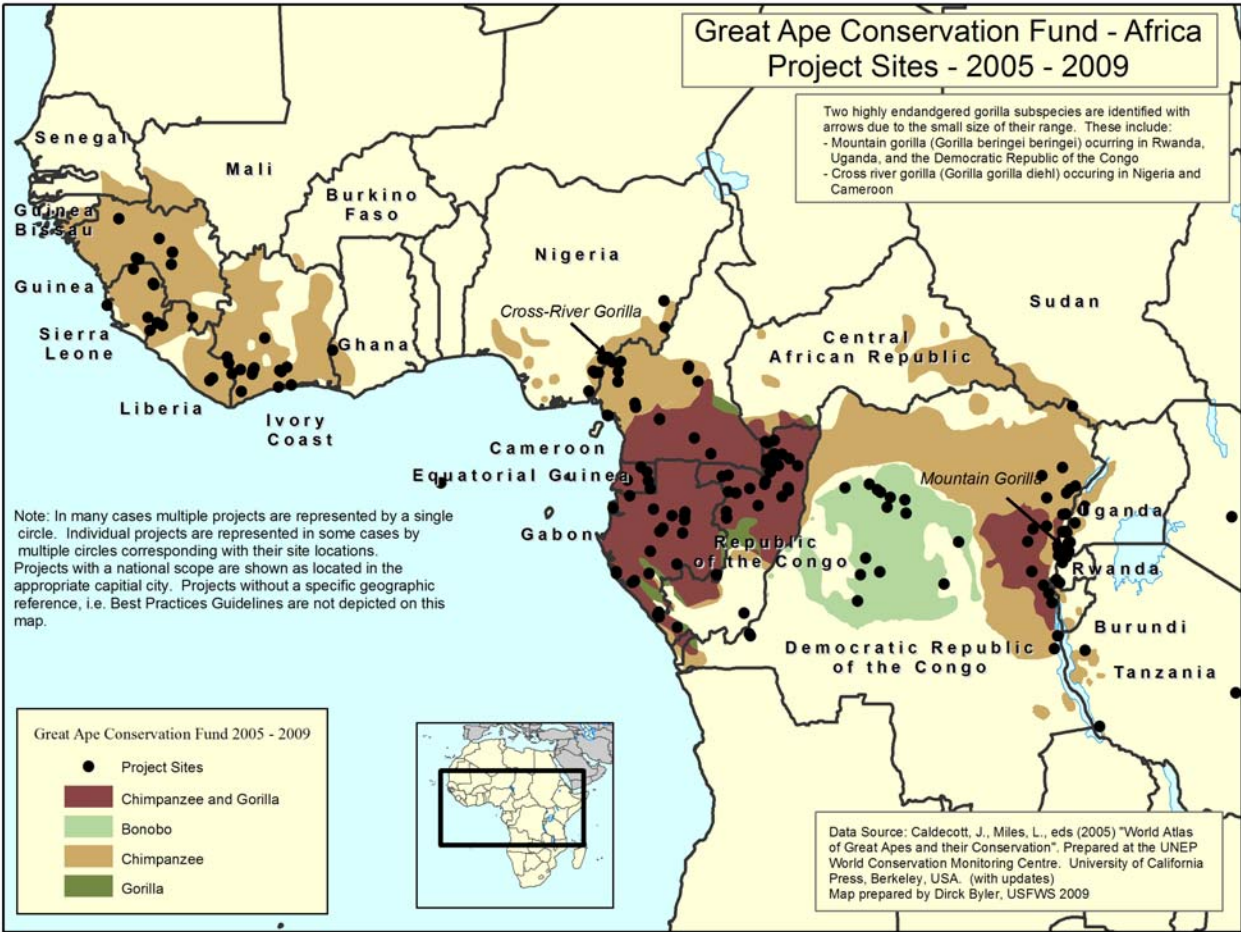
4.1 General Overview of Grants Program

The GACF/CARPE grant portfolio represents an investment approach that emphasizes collaboration over “ownership.” Grants are strongly oriented toward direct action at the field level and are driven by demand from partners and potential partners. The species focus builds upon and enhances the capacities of a community of conservation professionals and staffs whose programs provide longer term continuity to what are usually short duration targeted field support funds. The staff of the GACF is actively engaged in professional relationships and networks involving other government and foundation donors, professional groups and networks such as the IUCN specialist groups, and with grant implementers and stakeholders in the field. This hands-on approach gives the program a distinctive character and trajectory. Personal and professional interaction with recipients fosters an awareness and sense of community between USFWS staffs, grantees, and other institutions and funders. Frequently, recipients reapply to the GACF to obtain either intermittent or continuous funding over a series of grant cycles. Newer and smaller organizations come to the attention of the Service and are urged to apply.

The result after four years of funding under the transfer mechanism is a diverse portfolio of 106 ongoing or completed grants spanning six countries in the Central Africa region: Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Gabon. The geographic range of GACF funding is depicted in Map 2, which also shows non-USAID supported grants outside the CAPRE landscapes. There is some clustering of grants along the Albertine Rift and at the confluence of the Republic of Congo, CAR, and Cameroon, but it is clear from the map that grants are distributed across the range of all African Great Ape species.

As a funding organization, USFWS works with other philanthropists and donors to ensure that funding is provided in a coordinated and well-structured manner, with transparency amongst funders, thus enabling a more holistic and integrated approach to funding of programs. By sharing information about funding, other grant-making organizations report that the GACF helps ensure funding not just for a specific grant but increasingly for all the critical pieces of a broader program. This proactive funding style offers a constructive step forward toward greater efficiency and impact.

Map 2: The geographic range of GACF funding



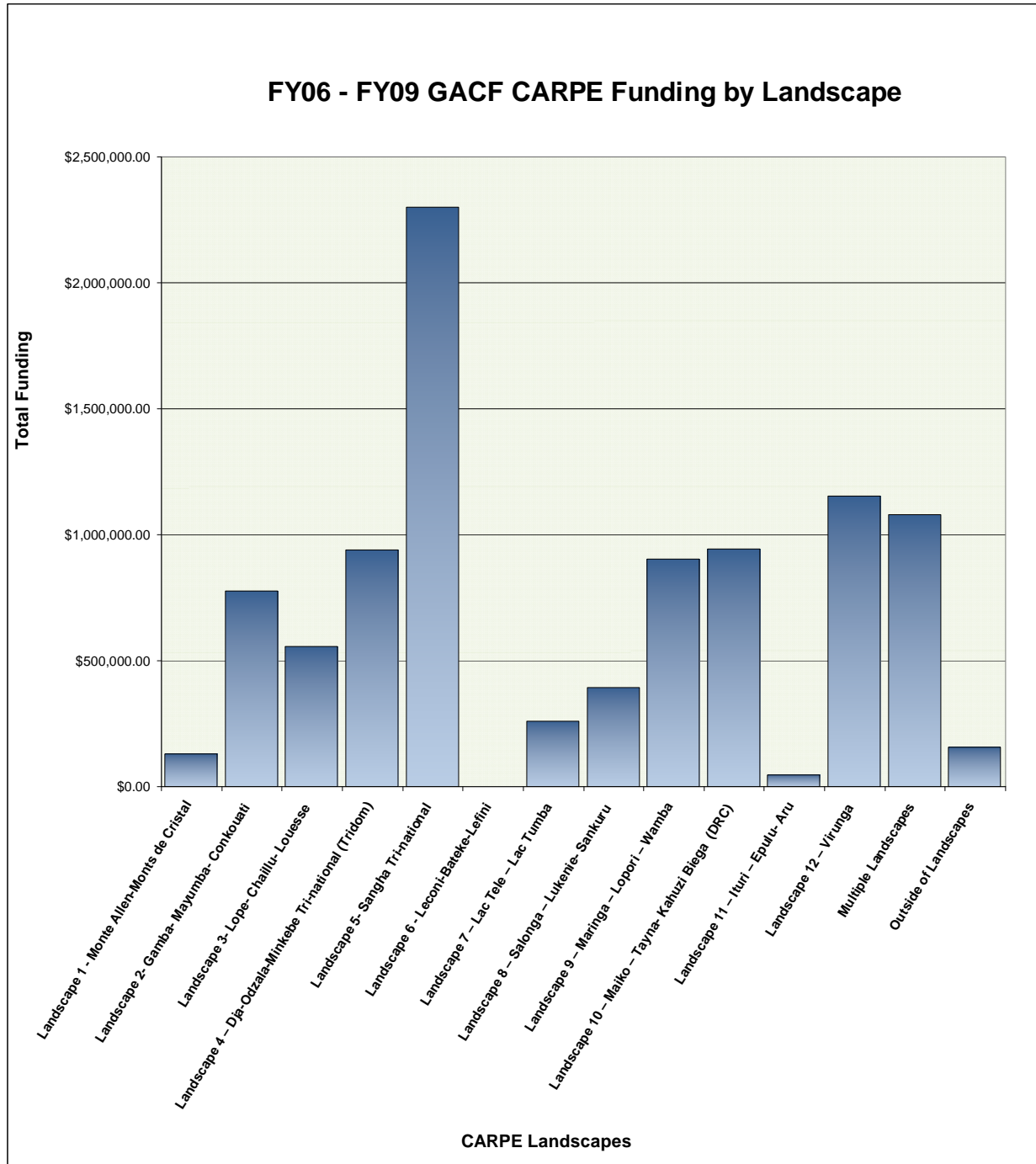
Grants in the CARPE landscapes are reviewed in part based on the importance of the threats to the ape population or its habitat, in part on the density of ape populations and in part on the urgency of need and the potential impact of meeting the need. The grants span a range of themes broken down by the evaluation into the following categories:

- Monitoring and Applied Research,
- Critical Habitat Protection
- Species Recovery and Health
- Governance and Enforcement
- Conservation Outreach and Education
- Training/Capacity Building/Technical Assistance
- Strategic Planning/Best Practices Development and Dissemination
- Fostering Innovative Opportunities

In some cases grants could fit more than one category or provide funding to a range of activities that span two or more of these categories. For this reason, the team did not attempt to disaggregate the funds by strategic category.

Figure 1 and Table 2 show the funding by landscape. From the chart, it is clear that some landscapes received considerably more than others. The detailed breakdown is given in the accompanying table, which also provides data on the corresponding matching funds made available by the partners and other non-USG funding sources.

Figure 1: Funding by Landscape



Current guidance for GACF applicants suggests modest (\$50,000) one-year grant applications would be favored in the review, thus reflecting an intention to maximize the breadth of coverage over depth. GACF grant managers reported a range of understanding about grant size and duration, but generally felt one-year \$50,000 grants represented what they perceived as the USFWS ideal. In fact, the grants for the program are often larger and increasingly are given for more than a single year. Multi-year grants are funded, however, from a single fiscal year’s obligation. Tables 3 and 4 show that multi-year grant now comprise more than a quarter of the

total funding; many of these are recent grants and reflect adaptation. Conservation objectives benefit from longer and more predictable funding; administrative burden is reduced in larger single grants over a series of smaller ones. Figure 2 illustrates the grant size distribution by small, medium, and larger grants with an almost exactly 25% of grants in the small and larger categories.

Table 2: Funding by Landscape, by funding source and matching funds

Landscape	USFWS GACF (USAID transfer) FY06 - FY09	Matching Funds (FWS and Partner)
Landscape 1 - Monte Allen-Monts de Cristal	\$130,000.00	\$35,582.00
Landscape 2- Gamba- Mayumba- Conkouati	\$775,390.00	\$677,907.00
Landscape 3- Lope- Chaillu- Louesse	\$557,072.00	\$558,426.00
Landscape 4 – Dja-Odzala-Minkebe Tri-national (Tridom)	\$940,163.90	\$953,584.70
Landscape 5- Sangha Tri-national	\$2,298,882.30	\$1,714,248.00
Landscape 6 - Leconi-Bateke-Lefini		
Landscape 7 – Lac Tele – Lac Tumba	\$259,774.00	\$92,251.00
Landscape 8 – Salonga – Lukenie-Sankuru	\$393,054.70	\$471,684.20
Landscape 9 – Maringa – Lopori – Wamba	\$904,225.00	\$1,195,460.00
Landscape 10 – Maiko – Tayna- Kahuzi Biega (DRC)	\$943,735.00	\$1,543,607.00
Landscape 11 – Ituri – Epulu- Aru	\$47,257.00	\$32,659.00
Landscape 12 – Virunga	\$1,152,520.00	\$2,102,830.00
Multiple Landscapes	\$1,079,635.00	\$788,841.00
Outside of Landscapes	\$157,484.00	\$115,823.00
Total (n=106 grants)	\$9,639,192.90	\$10,282,902.90

Table 3. GACF CARPE Grant Statistics

(n=106 grants)

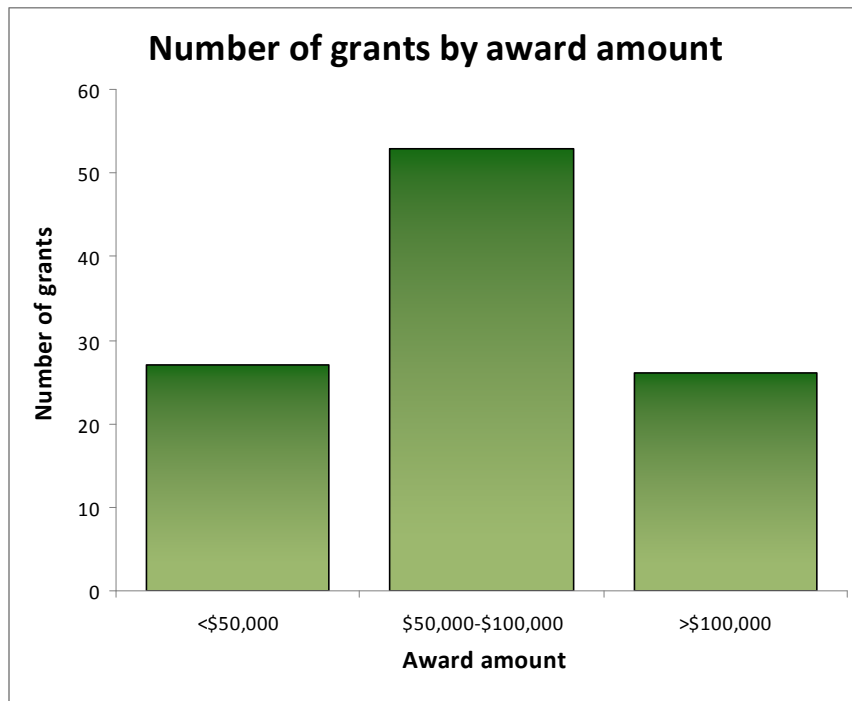
Total Awarded	\$9,639,192.90
Average award	\$90,935.78
Median award	\$76,015.50

Table 4. GACF CARPE Multiyear Grants

(n=18 grants)

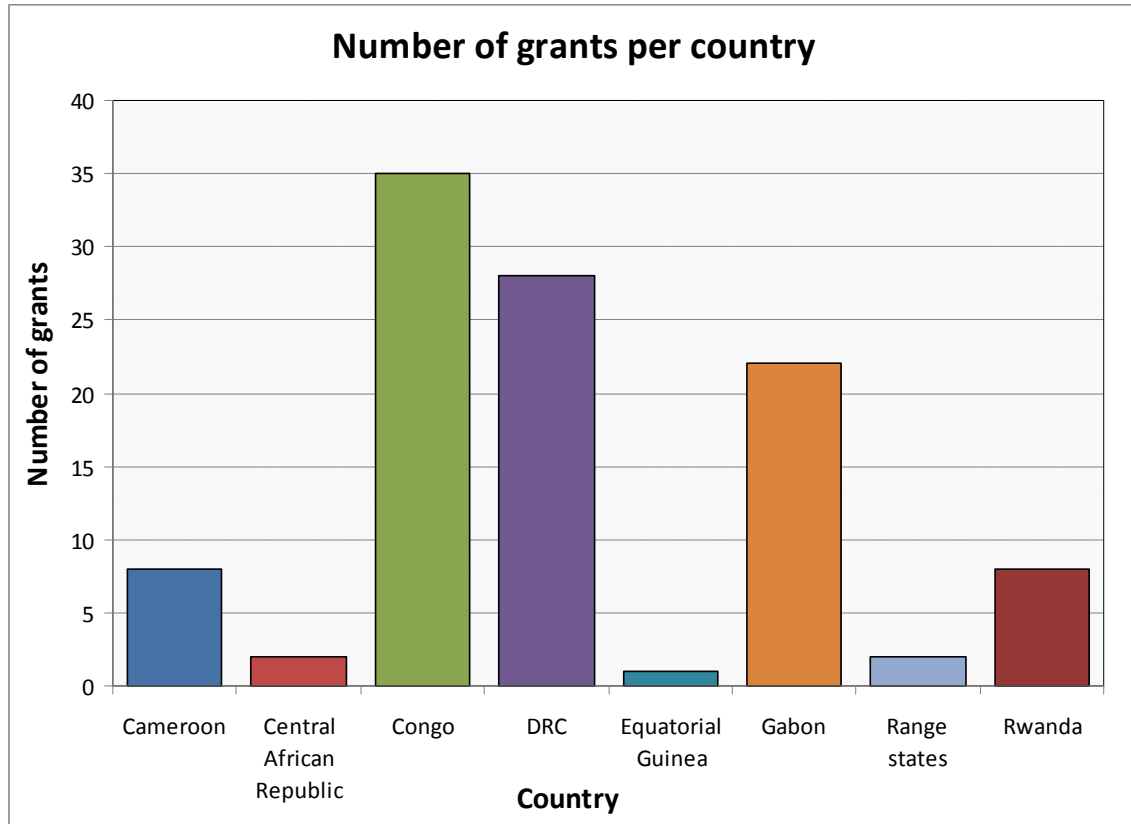
Total awarded	\$2,501,141.00
Average award	\$138,952.28
Median Award	\$125,992.00

Figure 2: Number of grants by award amount



Grants are not evenly distributed across the Congo Basin. Figure 3 shows an emphasis for the USAID transfer on three countries – Republic of Congo, DRC, and Gabon. These are also important recipients of CARPE funding and as such provide an established base to the organizations that partner both with USAID and with the USFWS. Cameroon has fewer grants despite important but threatened forest resources in the CARPE areas of the southeast; however, Cameroon receives additional non-USAID CARPE support for activities in the western part of the country that lies outside the CARPE region. This includes important support to organizations involved in protecting the threatened Cross River gorillas of the Western highlands landscape bordering Nigeria. The evaluation attempted to correlate grant coverage with Great Ape population densities, but data is inadequate. Some focus areas of funding such as the TNS landscape clearly have high great ape populations, but others such as Lope in Gabon have lower numbers. Rwanda has received relatively high funding given the size of the country and the concentration is even more pronounced when considering that funding was essentially for a mountain gorilla population that numbers less than 400; however the strategic focus on a tri-national management framework, economically viable ecotourism, and capacity of applicant organizations appears results-focused and cost effective.

Figure 3: Grants issued by country



4.2 The Fund Transfer -- GACF as a CBFP Small Grant Delivery Mechanism

The evaluation team examined the CARPE-GACF transfer mechanism from a programmatic perspective. The team understood that the shift of funds was not an Administration decision requested by USAID but a Congressional mandate. CARPE program management, which program had relocated after Phase I from Washington to Kinshasa-based field office asserted that the transfer was not consistent with the geographic relocation. GACF-CARPE grants both contribute to the overall USG CBFP support and both operate primarily through NGO partners implementing activities within defined CARPE landscapes. In addition to programmatic and related budgetary issues, the evaluation sought to examine the implementation effectiveness and efficiency at the field level. In this section, we address questions regarding the Congressional rationale for the transfer and the experience of USAID, USFWS, and implementing partners since the grants have been operative.

These programmatic issues sit at the confluence of the GACA, CARPE and CBFP and are of importance to future USG conservation efforts in Central Africa. In examining the transfer mechanism, the team reviewed and interpreted the record of congressional action and legislative processes affecting CARPE/GACF. In this regard the team assembled documents, attended the Congressional International Conservation Caucus (ICC) events, observed House sub-committee proceedings, held key informant interviews with senior congressional staff, executive staff of

International Conservation Caucus Foundation (ICCF) and member NGOs, and interviewed conservation organizations' legislative affairs staffs. We met jointly with USAID and USFWS staff to review language guiding FAA authorizations for the GACF CARPE transfer.⁴ We met separately with USFWS and USAID biodiversity staff to review the transfer and its operation.

4.2.1 General Findings

Through GACF, USFWS has provided significant funding to CARPE's landscape model of conservation and done so in a manner that largely complements, not duplicates, the USAID/CARPE core funding. Both contribute to implementation of integrated approaches to conservation within a landscape approach and within the boundaries of CBFP landscapes. Thus far CARPE has made its greatest impact in creating an overarching structure and associated macro-zoning frameworks, while USFWS species based grants have concentrated on more specific conservation challenges that arise within a landscape. Both CARPE and GACF operate from threats-based analysis. CARPE landscape consortia landscape grants are for multiple years with detailed annual planning and reporting. USFWS grants are given for a single year and cover generally a 1-2 year period with no certainty of continued support. Many USFWS GACF grants, support and expand what would be a single program area in a CARPE consortia work plans.

CARPE also manages a small grant fund that distributes some \$300,000 to \$400,000 annually to National NGOs of Central Africa to build their capacity to advocate conservation policy and to work with national governments. The evaluation team was asked to assess whether this small grant mechanism could potentially assume the grant making functions carried out by USFWS with USAID funds. The team found that there were some USFWS grants that overlapped with the USAID small grants program. Briefly, USAID grants, through a program administered by IUCN, are intended as conservation capacity building grants to local rural development NGOs who submit proposals through CARPE's country focal points. At around \$25,000, USAID grants are smaller on average than GACF grants and focused on community conservation issues outside the formal protected areas. Like USAID CARPE's small grants, USFWS grants are landscape-targeted; however, they are different in terms of objective and philosophy. Like the USAID funded CARPE consortia, USFWS relies primarily on achieving indirectly impact by providing through international NGOs and international conservation experts. Given the operational differences between two approaches, it makes sense to maintain each distinctly on its own merits.

The USAID transfer to GACF expands overall support to the landscapes. USFWS funding enhances the total pool of leveraged funding to CBFP by attracting additional matching resources for conservation in the Congo Basin. NGO partners are able to access different matching funds for USAID and for USFWS funded activities. A growing USFWS partnership with ARCUS Foundation in support of field grantees for research and enforcement as well as for strategy development (i.e. through IUCN Specialist Groups) illustrates this point. This additional funding supports activities that fit under the CARPE's model of land use planning, but would not generally be the types of activities that CARPE could or would be willing to fund.

⁴ Each year the guidance varies, and future guidance may be different than what was reviewed to date. Each annual transfer is guided by a memorandum between the two agencies.

Strategic collaboration with the USAID/CARPE field office, and by extension nationally-based CARPE focal points, has been absent to the extent that the USFWS program is neither well-understood, nor fully accepted by USAID whose program it purports to strengthen. USFWS has not engaged adequately in regular communication with CARPE field staff and bilateral USAID missions (DRC and Rwanda) in the Congo Basin. That said on an occasional *ad hoc* basis, USFWS have requested input a specific grant issue or point directly from the CARPE field office. A foundation exists for expanded communication; the team believes following upon the evaluation activities that communication has improved and become more frequent.

Linkages between CARPE and Washington CARPE partners were reported by the field to have been more limited in recent years than in the past. This may be related to limited trips by CARPE staff to the US, reductions in US-based CARPE “crosscutting” partners, and to an overall lower profile for the CBFP. After CARPE’s mid-term evaluation in 2006, CARPE field management became more focused in the relationships it pursued in Washington with an obvious emphasis on those providing cross-cutting service to CARPE’s field partners in the landscapes. USFWS which had been active (though the great ape and African elephant grants and other funds) prior to CARPE’s midterm evaluation continued its field activities. At about this time, Congress determined to expand support to the Great Ape Conservation Fund in the region by directing the transfer of funds from USAID. The evaluation took place following a period of contention in which USAID sought to retain these funds and more directly manage the increased appropriation from CBFP funds for GACA activities.

USFWS has, from the outset of USG support to the Congo Basin, been an active member in the set of Washington-based CARPE and CBFP partners who meet periodically in the US. For GACF grants, USAID has designated USFWS contact persons in the biodiversity team of the EGAT Bureau for grant review and in the Bureau for Africa for MOU and fund transfer management. The use of a USAID Washington-based staff person has added to program effectiveness and coordination with CARPE field programs, but this role is insufficient especially as USAID/Washington staff and priorities change over time. At the same time, the USAID/CARPE field office has expanded and become more autonomous. The expansion of the USFWS GACF funding in the Congo Basin is perceived as a cost to the USAID CARPE program, but absent retaining management authority, it is not one that USAID has readily accepted. It has never been proposed in the Administration’s Congressional Budget Justification and persists by Congressional intervention.

4.2.2 The Great Ape Conservation Act and Great Ape Conservation Fund

Congress: The U.S. Congress enacted the Great Ape Conservation Act of 2000 in response to the decline of ape populations in Africa and Asia, whose long-term survival in the wild is in serious jeopardy despite GACF and other investments. The Act has two purposes: (1) to sustain viable populations of apes in the wild, and (2) to assist in the conservation and protection of apes by supporting the conservation programs of countries in which ape populations are located. To accomplish these purposes, GACA creates the Great Ape Conservation Fund to support and provide financial resources to conservation programs of countries within the range of apes and to

projects of persons and organizations with expertise applicable to the conservation of apes.

The GACF assists the conservation of apes by supporting:

- implementation of conservation programs to protect at-risk ape populations and their habitats;
- in-situ research on ape populations and habitat including surveys and monitoring;
- community outreach and conservation education;
- compliance with CITES and other applicable laws that prohibit or regulate the taking or trade of apes or regulate the use and management of ape habitat;
- protected area/reserve management in important ape range;
- development and execution of ape conservation management plans;
- efforts to decrease human-ape conflict, and;
- strengthening of local capacity to implement conservation programs.

The team found that GACA continues to receive strong bipartisan congressional support through both House and Senate International Conservation Caucuses. The caucuses represent a sizable level of support. For example, numbering over 220, the Congressional Conservation Caucus constitutes a majority of House members and it is one of the largest. Recently, the Administration officials and several wildlife conservation groups urged Congress to reauthorize federal aid to help conserve great ape populations around the world. The House authored the original legislation in 2000 to provide federal funding through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for international great ape habitat conservation efforts in Africa and Asia. The House Natural Resources Committee's Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans and Wildlife oversees the GACA and other USG international species conservation funds.⁵ The recently adopted Great Ape Conservation Reauthorization Amendments Act of 2010, H.R. 4416 reauthorizes federal funding for international conservation efforts of gorillas, chimpanzees, orangutans, bonobos, and other great apes. The bill's author, Representative George Miller (D-CA), was quoted in a lead up to the vote on this legislation, "Great apes are our closest non-human relatives on the planet, but the threats they face from people are all too real. We have seen the devastation of wild primate populations throughout Africa and Asia. Since the authorization of this great ape bill ten years ago, our relatively small federal investment has been matched by significant local and private funding, boosting efforts to save gorillas and other great apes. We must reauthorize the program to enable these successful programs to flourish."

Reauthorization coincided with the ten-year anniversary of the USG commitment to the Central Africa Forest Commission as defined by the landmark Yaoundé Declaration (1999), thereby underscoring the importance of great apes as flagship species in many of the CARPE landscapes. These milestones were recognized during the course of high profile meetings of the Congo Basin Heads of State and ministers in Washington, which underscored continuing support by Congress and related advocacy groups for the transfer mechanism of USAID biodiversity funds to support

⁵ These funds are modeled on the original African Elephant Fund. They adopt similar language and represent an effort to provide US direct support for conservation of species of global significance and because of a charismatic or iconic nature of interest to the American people. In each case the USFWS is given the lead authority to implement the US commitment.

the GACF. Although not reviewed as part of the evaluation, forward guidance from this year's deliberations suggest a broadening interpretation of the distinct role played by the USFWS in support of conservation in the Central Africa region. (See text of GACA in Annex 8)

The evaluation team found that the appropriations process deemed USFWS to be the best and most appropriate institution to support great ape conservation in the Congo Basin but that direct budgetary tools for funding GACF and other international species funds for that matter were limited. The FAA, through a Congressional biodiversity earmark which until recently was entirely directed at USAID (\$200 million in FY09), provided a means to supplement the funding amount relative to the conservation challenges and to support the wider goals of the CBFP at the same time. Under successive appropriations \$2,500,000 was transferred from USAID's biodiversity appropriation to the USFWS. According to appropriations sources, the decision of whether to draw such funds from the CARPE provision otherwise from this line item was a decision that was left to USAID to make; however, the guidance formally issued specifies that the \$2.5 m be drawn from the CBFP line item . It is the evaluation team's understanding that in the future USAID may not make the transfer specific to CARPE accounting.

In the intra-Agency debate leading up to the FY 2005 appropriation USAID challenged this transfer arguing they could more effectively achieve great ape conservation using existing CARPE instruments and partners. That argument did not prevail in Congress and through the legal review process, the transfer was substantiated. Congress and its conservation constituency reiterated the intent to see USFWS administer these CBFP funds. Evidence suggests that the practice will continue and thus should be planned for. Both agencies do continue to collaborate and to some degree coordinate program implementation with NGO partners in the CARPE landscapes.

As noted the nature of the transfer appears to be changing and is moving toward a more general USAID support to USFWS international programs to support conservation activities without being limited only to great apes in pre-defined landscapes.

In the biodiversity support for FY09 under FAA, H.R. 1105, section 7083(c) states, "That of the funds made available under this paragraph, not less than \$17,500,000 shall be made available for the Congo Basin Forest Partnership of which not less than \$2,500,000 shall be made available to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service for conservation programs in Africa." Further guidance was provided by explanatory notes regarding the appropriations. The explanatory statement accompanying H.R. 1105 clarifies that the \$2,500,000 transfer is "to protect the habitat of great apes in Central Africa." No reference is made to specific CARPE landscapes, but the intent at that time appears to be at least for continued support to the GACA provisions.

For FY 2010, for example, language of the Omnibus Appropriations Act separates the CBFP earmark of \$20.5 million from a directive for \$5 million for USFWS under the Conference Committee report.

Efforts to support great apes as well as other endangered species are further bolstered through the International Conservation Caucus Foundation (ICCF). The foundation is a member-based organization comprised of private sector corporations, conservation NGOs and others whose

intent is to catalyze bipartisan support for international conservation policies and programs. Through its constituent members, the comparative institutional strengths of the USFWS (e.g. technical experience in wildlife conservation, ability to support research, monitoring and enforcement within protected areas) receive reinforcement and thus contribute to congressional commitment to explicit involvement of the Service in the GACF and other international actions. ICCF's Executive Director emphasized that both USAID and USFWS through its Wildlife Without Borders program were considered strong allies to the conservation community, but the larger NGOs which have an advisory role to the ICCF stressed that USFWS played the role of a more direct partner thus providing "the biggest bang for the buck." It is of note that the ICCF grew out of efforts to craft legislation enabling U.S. participation in the CBFP. These same organizations pushed for the emphasis on field programs and strong NGO roles in CARPE II and were in a position, in effect, to advocate for the continued involvement of the FWS.

ICCF felt that of the small foreign assistance set-aside for conservation, when channeled through USAID, funds were inevitably split between conservation and development activities whereas FWS funds were more specifically targeted to core conservation functions. Recognizing that the USFWS can do little to promote its own successes within government, ICCF has made an effort with its limited resources to draw Congress's attention to USFWS's accomplishments, which they state were achieved with "almost embarrassingly little funding." A recent USFWS Wildlife Without Borders presentation sponsored by ICCF was attended by over 125 people many of whom were congressional staffers. The ICCF position, reflective of its conservation NGO constituents, would like to see a larger budget and larger role for USFWS and more open competition for conservation funds between agencies. While not the only force behind Congressional commitment to the CBFP transfer, ICCF has been a factor.

On the Senate appropriations side, few people are even aware of the issue according to Tim Rieser, a foreign policy staff member for Senator Patrick Leahy, Chairman of the Appropriations subcommittee which funds U.S. foreign aid programs. Rieser has served as one of the point people in the appropriations process that supports the Wildlife Without Borders funding (like GACF) in general and specifically the USAID transfer mandate. One reason for the limited funding available for USFWS international conservation programs is that under the FAA there is no easy source for such funds. They must be cleaved off from other areas of the budget. Funding is thus both limited, and not easily expanded. Rieser has sustained the effort each year to keep species funds such as GACF stable or growing slightly. USFWS/DOI/OMB has not requested higher levels within the DOI budget. However, the Interior Appropriations Committee has over time increased funding to the FWS International Affairs programs.

A third source of advocacy for international conservation efforts arises from the Multinational Species Coalition of affiliated NGOs seeking to expand Congressional and other governmental support for international programs. This effort has mostly been underwritten by WWF who benefit less than some other conservation NGOs from the Wildlife Without Borders conservation funds. The coalition is able to prepare testimony and briefings and catalyze government relations staff activities of coalition member organization including numerous GACF-CARPE grant recipients (WCS, JGI, AWF, WCS, FFI, and WWF, and possibly others). In the words of one associated staffer, USFWS has remained "remarkably unbureaucratic compared to USAID."

Presumably, this provides some rationale to favor independent funding to each agency and support for USFWS direct management of transferred funds.

Other factors undoubtedly drive the sustained interest in maintaining or even potentially increasing the 632 (a) transfer of biodiversity funds.⁶ These are the principal drivers as identified by the evaluation. In sum, Congress regards USFWS as a conservation organization. It sees USAID more as a development organization that at times supports conservation when conservation is aligned with development goals. These perceptions and the underlying foundation for them have and continue to favor maintaining a funding transfer that reinforces USFWS autonomy in managing the additional GACF funds.

4.2.3 Transfer Mechanism Operation

USAID Perspective:

USAID expressed three general and interrelated concerns with the fund transfer mechanism. The first involved the legal use of USAID essentially as a pass through. The second involves management coordination of program implementation at the field level. The third involved USAID accountability for the reporting funds under the FAA biodiversity set-aside.

The CARPE field office felt that the appropriation system was odd in the sense that the funds came from one appropriation account agency, but that the implementing agency, USAID, had no management authority of over the use of the funds. For that reason, the field team had strongly supported USAID's legal effort to retain the transfer funds within its CARPE program to be administered directly in support of GACA. In questioning whether this was the best arrangement, CARPE pushed for annual appropriation language, which until recently that directed USFWS-CARPE funds mandated to support CBF be applied geographically to within landscapes. USFWS carefully followed this geographic guidance in separating GACF/CARPE from general GACF grants. Technical requirements for all GACF grants are the identical, but when an application qualifies for CARPE funds, they are always drawn from the transfer rather than the direct USFWS appropriated funds.

In CARPE, USAID has worked extensively with other US government agencies since in its second phase (2003-2006). It maintained service agreements with among others, the Forest Service, National Parks Service, Smithsonian Institute, NASA, and the USFWS. These agencies were tasked to provide cross-cutting services to the overall program and to the conservation NGO consortia implementing field programs in individual landscapes. Following its mid-term evaluation, CARPE reduced the number of Federal agencies and more precisely defined their roles, which are funded through FAA 632 (b) (PASA) interagency transfers. USAID retains much greater management control under the 632 (b) transfers. By the time these changes were made, USFWS was already receiving its direct 632 (a) transfer, so CARPE did not additionally

⁶ Two types of fund transfers are possible from one Federal Agency to another. Under FAA 632 (a) transfers USAID does not retain direct management functions over the funds, whereas under 632 (b) transfers USAID does retain financial and some management authority.

include USFWS as a cross-cutting service provider during the 2006-2009 period. From USAID's standpoint this established an uncomfortable duopoly of government relations with the NGO landscape consortia. CARPE management did feel optimistic about this arrangement since USFWS management of the grant program was deeply grounded in the region and had strong relationships with the NGOs.

The CBFP/GACF effort thus builds on USFWS earlier presence which implemented both elephant and great ape conservation grants as well as providing leadership to the CARPE cross-cutting theme of illegal bushmeat trade.

During the 2006-2009 period, the evaluation team learned that there was minimal involvement of the CARPE field office in the review of grant submissions, oversight of grant implementation, and sharing of results. CARPE management felt impacted but not informed. In Washington, USFWS continued to work closely with USAID staff in filtering the grant requests to keep them in line with larger CARPE programmatic objectives. This arrangement proved generally satisfactory at the operational level in part because of the commitment and continuity of the USAID/Washington staff that support and communicate with the CARPE program in the field office. One and sometimes two EGAT Biodiversity Team members, who support CARPE in Washington as part of program design and evaluation, earmark compliance accounting and reporting responsibilities provided by the Team to most USAID operating units with biodiversity programs, also serve as external reviewer(s) for the USAID-funded GACF grants. However, the staff position in Washington funds only 10% of a full time equivalent, and based only on assessment of time required for supporting the transfer and GACF reviews, this seems insufficient to the overall range of CARPE challenges and needs on the Washington side.

Despite limitations, USAID has been able to ensure that grants remain consistent with overall CARPE programming and guarded against unnecessary overlap in the activities selected for grant funding. The USAID/CARPE Washington contact brought up issues with the CARPE field office when they rose to a certain level of importance. Over time however, staff shifted and the links between the CARPE Washington staff/stakeholders and the field CARPE team became less immediate and integrated with day-to-day field program management. During this time, the political profile of CARPE and CBFP diminished. The novel initiative persists with support from the CARPE office, the NGO partners and from some mostly technical associates in Washington. Higher level interest was focused on other international priorities.

The evaluation found the situation to be deteriorating with no clear roadmap for improvement. The CARPE field office felt increasingly detached from the USFWS-funded grant activities. CARPE management reported, given that the landscape partners and USFWS grantees largely overlapped, that their own results-focused discipline and accountability suffered. From a CARPE standpoint, landscape implementing partners were spending substantial time being distracted into writing "onerous" FWS grants and reports, and that landscape partners were reporting to CARPE thus that they were overworked. This led to mounting frustration over what USAID CARPE perceived as a lack of communication and clarity about the grant program. USAID questioned if there was a strategic plan guiding the grants, and if not, why not. For them, it was not clear how a species strategy(s) for grants could be coordinated with USAID's overall landscape and land use planning approaches.

A final concern of USAID involves meeting FAA criteria for classifying and accounting for funds meeting biodiversity requirements. Essentially, to be scored as biodiversity funding, activities must include the following:

- 1) The program must have an explicit biodiversity objective, *it isn't enough to have biodiversity conservation result as a positive externality from another program*;
- 2) Activities must be identified based on an analysis of threats to biodiversity;
- 3) The program must monitor associated indicators for biodiversity conservation;
- 4) Site-based programs must have the intent to positively impact biodiversity in biologically significant areas.

In practice, GACA funding criteria and the requisites for meeting biodiversity coding are consistent with one another. USFWS species programs are, if anything, more narrowly focused on core biodiversity activities than many USAID-managed activities that increasingly integrate biodiversity conservation into multi-sectoral programs. Grants are intended to address threats to great ape survival and grantees report on progress, consistent with their short-term and wide ranging nature and within USFWS requirements. From a USAID standpoint, this grant monitoring is different than joint USAID/State Department indicator reporting. There is some concern by USAID that grantees may be reporting results to CARPE that are in part funded by USAID-supported USFWS grants or vice versa. Additionally, at the central level, USAID/Washington must score the total funding against the biodiversity budget line. In rare instances primarily associated with sanctuaries, USAID needs a better clarification that they do or do not meet the fourth criteria.

USFWS perspective:

The GACF (including CBFP/CARPE funded) program management is housed in a small unit within the USFWS Office of International Affairs, Division of International Conservation. Both the GACF and other funds, notably the African Elephant Fund, have an impact on the CARPE landscapes and by extension, the CARPE management. Program managers report that because these grant programs are small relative to core funded international development projects and programs, they are generally “off the radar” as far as other agencies are concerned. Nonetheless, USFWS participates consistently and actively as a member of the small committed group of CARPE stakeholders and service providers who continue to meet in Washington. CBPF/GACF devotes its limited time and budget to providing both funds and technical partnering with the network of conservation organizations aligned with the grant program goals. Having USAID Washington involved in the grant review process and working with the Washington CARPE stakeholders, USFWS operated under an assumption that the CARPE field program’s understanding of the program would be sufficient.

As noted, the USFWS has been given statutory responsibility to operate a species program world-wide and had an established and recognized role in the Congo Basin prior to initiation of

the USAID transfer to USFWS/GACF. Under CBFP, where international wildlife and development intersect and the USG has an active presence, USFWS, as a leading wildlife agency, should from their perspective be turned to with greater frequency. Whereas CARPE felt the transfer took funds from their potential budget and control, USFWS felt that CARPE missed an opportunity to better integrate USFWS expertise during the design and development of its CARPE Phase IIb program. From USFWS perspective, “USAID-CARPE chose not to bring USFWS into the program, when the USFWS is the obvious choice for helping to develop and implement a wildlife conservation programs in Africa.” Moreover, in some cases, the USFWS through the GACF and AECF have been overseeing conservation initiatives around which CARPE has been built. This suggests that USFWS could be designated a co-equal role to play with USFS, NASA, USDA, and others to deliver conservation programs. Part of the problem is that these larger issues of role definition between US agencies transcend the specific context of USAID CARPE and USFWS GACF program managers.

The burden of sharing information, from the USFWS perspective, thus should not rest solely upon the USFWS. Rather Communication becomes an equal and shared responsibility among implementing agencies. With these larger issues left ambiguous and USFWS GACF receiving a portion of its funds through USAID, direct communication or information sharing procedures were not instituted and communication from both instances was intermittent and of an *ad hoc* nature. In certain cases, USFWS did raise issues with the CARPE field office directly, communicate through Washington staff or through landscape partners.

The evaluation found that USFWS brought conservation expertise and flexible funding options to the program in unique ways that strengthened the overall CBFP effort. The CARPE field team acknowledged the general functionality of these arrangements, but as noted above, they called for greater clarity and better and more frequent communication. GACF managers at USFWS were not required to report or coordinate directly with CARPE’s field management structure nor vice versa. GACF managers did not negotiate directly with their CARPE counterparts about how the transfer funds were to be directed nor did CARPE reach out to integrate GACF management and programs into its planning. The two programs, each effective in its own right, operated in parallel yet with many of the same field partners. The evaluation found that USFWS autonomy was a contributing factor to tension with CARPE management over the nature of the funds transfer.

Additional tension is created by delays in the transfer of funds. The timing and release of funds from USAID to USFWS affected internal management of the grant program. The delay in the transfer of funding on an annual basis hampered USFWS ability to award funds transferred to the GACF grants in a timely manner. USAID funding cycles are problematic in the sense that FAA appropriations to USAID are generally made well into the fiscal year by Congress, and Congress subsequently requires additional clearance on the earmarks they have imposed. These become amplified as the procedures of further 632(a) transfer from USAID to USFWS add time and bring fiscal year funding limitations into play. GACF managers would sometimes have only a few months to allocate funds that had a two-year period in which to be expended. Grantees sometimes received grants after the annual cycle in which they had intended to work. This is discussed in Section 3.3 on USFWS role as a grantor.

As a USG program, USFWS in its CBFP GACF grants has thus far chosen not to develop *systematic* direct relationship with national governments in the Central Africa region. Should this approach change, coordination between agencies remains important, but seems likely to be a role for the Embassies and possibly to different bureaus of the State Department.

Grantee perspective:

The grant recipients are very clear in their ability to distinguish USAID and USFWS support and accountability. Overall, grant recipients were either unaware or less concerned by the ambiguities introduced to the CBFP from the fact of funds being transferred from one branch of government to another. As a source of funding and conservation partner, USFWS, through its regional and species funds, already possesses a defined identity, the details of which are discussed in Section 3.3 of this evaluation. For the conservation NGO community having both USAID and USFWS active and providing financial support in the context of the Congo Basin and CBFP was reported as a positive. For a number of smaller NGOs not included in the CARPE consortia, the USFWS played a different and frequently more high profile role, and importantly, it provided funding to non-consortia organizations where CARPE, other than via the IUCN-managed country grants and sub-grants from CARPE Landscape leads, could not. For grantees, the GACF expands both the scope of field support and the universe of actors involved.

These qualities are aptly summarized by one of the Service's key partners on the funding side:

“USFWS grants from the Great Ape Conservation Fund have targeted critical species and priorities in a thoughtful and thorough manner. They have been able to influence other funders and have leveraged additional funds for these priorities, thus strengthening conservation impact on the ground. The fact that this funding is from the US Government, and managed by a team of very experienced and technically strong staff, the grants have provided additional legitimacy to the work being done in the field, thus garnering both financial and political support for the work.” (Annette Lanjouw, Arcus Foundation and former AWF)

Grantees appreciated GACF flexibility with respect to geography. USFWS was also able to use either CBFP or non-CBFP GACF funds depending on the nature of the request. This gave them greater facility in supporting activities outside but programmatically related to the CARPE activities, a point underscored by one recipient, “As a region, TL2, a biologically rich area equal to the size of Illinois in western DRC, is not considered a CARPE landscape, and thus barred access to CARPE funds. The USFWS can fund outside CARPE landscapes.” Additional funding provided to the GACF through the transfer allowed the USFWS to allocate its existing appropriation to address high priority areas and issues outside of CARPE landscapes, such as the TL2.

USAID does not have uncommitted funds, and USFWS can respond quickly. For instance, “USFWS funding quickly responded when Karisoke gorilla groups split and our capacity was stretched thin to manage situation.” (Program Director, Rwanda) This complementarity and operational difference was echoed by others, “CARPE is big and slow and USFWS is fast and fits in all the holes of CARPE” (US Director for Field Operations in Rwanda). This is not to say there is no flexibility within the CARPE structure. For many grantees CARPE also provided

some degree of flexibility within the landscape construct of its programming. "USAID CARPE has flexibility within an approved workplan" (Landscape Leader, DRC) "Landscape approach allows for programmatic flexibility as it allows you to move resources in response to challenges such as a corrupt official at a specific national park. CARPE allows us to shift resources to another part of a landscape. (Furthermore) CARPE allows relatively easy funding flexibly within a landscape; NGOs tend to create structures that decrease flexibility through implementation design." (Country Director, Gabon)

Some grantees wanted the evaluation team to understand that in the field, removed from Washington, they view USAID and USFWS funding as separate, but complementary funding elements of the USG. They envision the funds as contributing in different ways to common landscape and conservation objectives. Both sources are important, but enable field staffs to work at differing rhythms within their programs. "CARPE funds core costs and USFWS funds operational costs/field work" (Country Director, Gabon)

Many grantees expressed a relatively clear understanding of the differentiated roles of USFWS and CARPE support. They also seemed more conversant in the complementarities of the two USG efforts than the agencies themselves. "CARPE is novel and innovative through project structure and this helps collaboration; the hard part is implementation of management plans. USFWS supports the day-to-day implementation in community areas, wildlife management, local group support, surveillance, and monitoring. USFWS and CARPE are complementary." (Landscape Leader, Gabon)

"USFWS and CARPE funds support different and complementary conservation approaches. In our case, USFWS funds monitoring and USAID supports landscape planning." (Country Director, DRC) "CARPE landscapes are so large, they are unmanageable. There is no need to reconfigure landscapes. CARPE dollars are spent in capitols convening a person versus USFWS that supports on-the-ground conservation. USFWS funding is focused on real life, day-to-day work." (Landscape Leader, Gabon)

"CARPE is focused on landscapes and does not stress national parks; CARPE funds focused outside parks and focused on planning process. This is not necessarily WCS approach which is committed to conservation inside and outside national parks. We apply to USFWS to fund national park work as a complement to CARPE." (Country Director, Gabon). "USAID does not fund monitoring in protected areas and parks, while USFWS does. Core protected areas are the critical biological resource of a landscape" (WCS Regional Monitoring Scientist) According to Lee White, former WCS Gabon Country Director and current Gabon National Park Service Director, "In Gabon where there has been huge investment in national park creation, having CARPE funds going to USFWS, helped WCS Gabon with this opportunity. This action breathed a bit of fresh air into CARPE."

Many grantees were aware of the limitations of each agency and could see how their programmatic complementarity advanced each other's mission. "We have little contact with CARPE in Rwanda. USFWS is adding to a lack of CARPE support in Rwanda Virungas." (Program Director, Rwanda) "USFWS is complementary to big USAID effort. With USAID

funding in Rwanda, can't cross borders and most conservation here is transboundary work. USFWS funding allows us to do this. “ (Chief of Party, Rwanda).

Finally, several respondents felt that while CARPE was a much larger and well-funded effort that the amount of monies reaching the field level roughly equal. "In Moukalaba Doudou area of the Gamba Complex (of Gabon), CARPE funds are roughly equal to USFWS funding reaching the ground at \$100,000." (Landscape Leader, Gabon) "In the end, CARPE dollars that reach the ground are same as USFWS funding to the same areas." (Country Director, Congo). This sentiment was repeated by many of the CARPE landscape partners, but Evaluation Team was not able to carry out a financial analysis of field level programs for all sites.

4.3 Performance of USFWS in the Grants Management Process

4.3.1 USFWS as a Grant Making Entity

USFWS through its international grants programs performs much as a private foundation. Accountability and performance measurements for private foundations are notoriously difficult. A majority of funders' lack a clear set of outcome measures against which to report their performance. Accountability within the private philanthropic community is often measured in general terms. In comparison, the USFWS grants program, while performing a parallel role to philanthropic and other grant making organizations, start from the premise that they are accountable. In the final instance, the organization is accountable to the US taxpayers whose monies are being used to further a specific legislative mandate.⁷

In the case of the CBFP funds, USFWS is accountable to the oversight organizations of the USG – GAO and OMB. More immediately, the USAID/CARPE transfer mechanism places the GACF funds squarely in the constellation of CBFP actors and implementers. Initially a US State Department initiative, CBFP provides the broadest level of program guidance but in practical terms, USG program implementation is predominantly USAID. The GACF funds evaluated here represent a direct transfer from USAID to USFWS of CBFP funds, but as detailed in the previous section, the management relationships are left unclear.

The evaluation team examined USFWS's grant making process through the activities of the GACF. A set of recommendations to improve grant making efficiency and effectiveness within the USFWS and at the intersection with other international USG partners and initiatives are provided.

⁷ Assistance award guidelines are objective, consistent with federal standards, and standardized across all WWB programs. Administrative details and requirements are spelled out in referenced documents available online to grant applicants. Assistance Award Guidelines (www.fws.gov/international/dicprograms/AAG%209-6-07.pdf), and Financial Assistance - Standard Award Terms and Conditions, www.fws.gov/international/dicprograms/AAG%209-6-07.pdf. These procedures were in effect for the CBFP/GACF funds; a portion of the transfer supports these administrative procedures at a marginal (9%) cost.

4.3.2 USFWS GACF Grants Process

In the course of this evaluation, our team reviewed proposals and reports and the GACF grant review process. In addition, we observed grant review committee meetings and interviewed stakeholders at all levels.

The team found most proposals were developed and submitted by organizations that were already familiar with the USFWS grant program either through the GACF or through other funds. Many of these USFWS partners had developed procedures, systems, and staff to manage and respond to the grant facility.

Proposals for support from the GACF are submitted by mail, and email to the USFWS or via grants.gov. The submission process for GACF and CBFP/GACF grants is identical. The decision of whether to fund with general USFWS GACF funds or USAID (or a combination) transfer funds is made during the review process and has generally been based on whether a grantee was located within the bounds of a CARPE landscape. USFWS provides proposal guidance with explicit review criteria for grant seekers (see Annex 5), an application checklist of necessary narrative, financial and organizational information is provided to assist grantseekers. There are two application deadlines during the year in November and April. In rare cases, exceptions can be made to the funding cycle (e.g., for an urgent disease outbreak).

Once submitted, proposals are logged in for review. Initial screening for submission compliance with guidelines is performed by the USFWS Program Officer. Proposal and supporting materials are reviewed. If specific information is absent in a submission, the Program Officer can request missing or incomplete information from a prospective applicant. Completed submissions are then sent to a Grants Review Committee that consists of three to five people from USFWS, Department of State/OES and USAID/EGAT/NRM/B. External reviews may be solicited on an *ad hoc* basis from specialized technical expertise for specific submissions upon request of the Program Officer.

The Grants Review Committee assesses proposals based on selection criteria and technical expertise of committee members and *ad hoc* external expert inputs. Proposals receive scores and are separated into three broadly defined categories – Approval, Conditional and Rejection. There is some gradation between categories. For example, some grants that would have “approved” determinations may gain conditional approvals due to the lack of specific information such as the status of project leadership transition or be held pending questions relating to a final report from a previous grant cycle submission. In some cases, acceptable components may be funded while other components are rejected.

After determinations are made, the Program Officer communicates with grantseekers about decisions. The Program Officer works with conditional determinations to fill in information gaps and clarify any concerns or questions and provide guidance to applicants for addressing deficits in submission. Conditional grant submissions are often resubmitted, but resubmission is no guarantee that the proposal will succeed in subsequent reviews. Program Officers often provide detailed responses to applicants highlighting the reasons why a proposal was rejected. This communication is intended to guide the applicant to developing better proposals in the

future. Notwithstanding, applicants report that some rejection letters do not always provide sufficient guidance, for example, on whether to resubmit an amended application in future years.

Successful applicants are required to submit a relative brief mid-term report half way through a grant period and a final report at the completion of the granting period. Final reports are required for any resubmission by applicants. There are sometimes exceptions when initial grant implementation is delayed creating follow on problems for project and funding continuity with any subsequent proposal submissions. Financial information from reports is reviewed by administrative personnel at USFWS. Midterm reports generally consist of succinct project and financial information. These reports provide grantees an opportunity to communicate with USFWS about any significant changes in proposal implementation. Final reports are more detailed in terms of assessing expenditures and project outcomes.

In reviewing the grant making process, the evaluation team seeks to assist the USFWS in increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of its granting process.

Our findings regarding the grant process are as follows:

1. *Proposals and reports are not uniform in style and length – although usually they do adhere to USFWS broad format requirements.* The present submission structure provides applicants with more than enough latitude to convey their requests and to report on progress. This heterogeneity of submissions may be a reflection of the precision of grantee understanding of the submission process. This heterogeneity of submissions makes the review process more cumbersome than necessary and makes it more difficult to assess proposals and reports in a comparative basis. Some proposals and reports reviewed by the evaluation team appeared to employ a tactic of overwhelming the USFWS with general contextual information and/or non-essential background information and/or material extracted from other reports. Longer proposals can represent grant seekers hedging their uncertainties of the process by assuming all information is useful. Such “padding” adds to the burden of proposal review and report assessment. With USAID CARPE as a comparison, "reporting word limit on narrative for CARPE mid-term report is 1500 words and 5000 words for annual CARPE reports and this includes lessons learned." (Country Director, Congo). Some grantees questioned the value of government support letter and the need for greater scrutiny of this grant requirement. "Government support letter is a rubber stamp process" (Landscape Lead, Gabon)

2. USFWS Grants are primarily one-year grants which constrain grantee programming horizons, limits longer term strategic planning, limits grantee ability to demonstrate success over the short term and adds grant processing burden for both the donor and grantee through greater proposal and reporting submissions. One grantee noted the challenges with one-year grants as follows -- "If you hire someone in Gabon you can't lay someone off - very difficult to let go - problematic when USFWS only funds efforts for one year. In addition we are competing with the private sector for talent, especially good managers, administrators, IT, and logistics." You can't hire these folks with one year support. (Landscape Lead, Gabon)

Given the perceived one-year grant limitation, some grantees submitted repeat annual submissions to gain support for longer term efforts. Some renewal proposals utilized nearly

exact language for follow-on submissions; thus begging the question whether the USFWS needs to develop a more streamlined, rigorous renewal process.

This also gets to the issue of multi-year grants. The GACF operates with one year funding commitments but can provide multi-year grants based on successful annual reviews and budget availability. Most grantees interviewed by the evaluation team were unaware that the USFWS now offers the opportunity to apply for multi-year grants.

3. *Grant reports represent an untapped opportunity for assessing best practices and collecting long term conservation data.* While required and monitored for compliance, the mid-term and final reports are not fully exploited. A common issue in grant making is the uneven attention paid to assessing grant reports. These reports contain a wealth of information but often grantees and grant-makers pay more attention to proposals than to reports. Reports are often filled with self-praise and accounts of successful outcomes that are often hard to verify independently. Our evaluation team found that the USFWS GACF reporting process is no exception.

Mid-term reports are administratively useful as they signal issues, particularly those related to budget or implementation timetables. Several grantees reported the need for more help with mid-term report submissions. One field program manager noted, "We need clearer guidance on reporting -- midpoint reporting should be short and concise" (Country Director, DRC). This perception among grantees is not universally shared, and guidance for mid-term reports is explicit⁸ and if anything, too broad-ranging. In at least two instances, grantees delayed mid-term reporting because they want to resolve issues before having to report, which is regrettable since USFWS program managers have been responsive and helpful when grantees encounter

⁸ Guidance, for example, calls for a description of the **current project status** that includes:

- a. For each objective stated in the project proposal, describe the activities undertaken to achieve that objective. Describe any activities that differ from the original work plan and explain reasons for change. Recipients are required to report in writing to the FWS Project Officer any deviations from the approved project scope of work.
- b. If objective(s) were not accomplished, explain the problems encountered, such as how they were addressed and the impact on the project results.
- c. Describe the results achieved and the products generated. Explain any deviation(s) between the expected products and the actual products.
- d. Provide a brief assessment of the project's impact on the conservation and management of plants, fish, habitats, or ecosystems. If possible, provide a list of the numbers and names of migratory, endangered or threatened species benefiting from the project, as well as major ecosystems and any reserves or protected areas benefiting from the project.
- e. Briefly describe any cooperation or collaboration among local organizations that was directly associated with this project.
- f. If equipment was purchased under this Award, provide the cost and the acquisition date of the equipment and a brief description of how the equipment was used during the period of performance of the Award and how it will be used in the future. Equipment purchase under this Award will become Recipient's property if it was used only for the purposes of the Award and can continue to be used for a similar purpose throughout its useful life.

legitimate obstacles to their planned implementation. Additionally, the reporting and submission guidelines have not been translated into French and communicated to field partners.

With reports that were submitted on a timely basis, the evaluation team observed the Program Officer to be responsive in facilitating, if necessary, modifications and extensions for grantees. Program management demonstrated a high degree of flexibility in this regard. The team also observed several instances of grant extension and reasonable adjustment to changes or reduction of certain activities. In some cases, grantees are not forthcoming and timely in their reporting. Substantial time is expended by the grant Program Officer in following up on grantees who have not submitted required reports. In some cases, grantees request follow-on funding prior to submitting periodic reports for previous grants.

As a process USFWS grants management procedures create unnecessary burden on the GACF technical manager. Because the GACF technical management staff do not have direct supervisory authority over USFWS grant administrative staff, most of the burden of communication follow-up with grantees falls to the technical division.

In examining reports, the evaluation team observed a wealth of information provided to the USFWS. Many grantees put in an enormous amount of effort in reporting. Yet, grantees report that they receive little feedback from USFWS on the content of the results reported. Reports are viewed by many grantees as the necessary administrative step for any subsequent application renewals. In some circumstances, the reporting process has become perfunctory and thus diminishing the value of the process. "Reporting on proposals includes cut and pasting from original proposal" (Country Director, Congo).

Given USFWS central role in funding great ape conservation; the data buried within reports is invaluable, especially when assessed over time and pooled across projects and species. In reviewing reports, the evaluation team found no formal data index mechanism that allows for abstracting, synthesizing or metadata analysis of report information. Beyond satisfying requirements for grant renewals, report data mining offers grantees an incentive to participate in a collective great ape data clearinghouse. "There is an opportunity for USFWS to perform a meta-analysis of GACF efforts: most useful lessons learned, great ape absence and presence data, gap analysis information, understanding the scope and capacity of training effort and finally get a sense of potential conservation successes and failures. " (Non-CARPE GACA Congo Basin grantees) In contrast to the CARPE website's Information Management Tool where Reports and Products are posted by the partners, the USFWS Wildlife without Border grants (including the GACF grants) are not internet available but must be specifically requested from the USFWS.

That much said, retrospective report evaluation capacity within the USFWS appears limited at the staffing level, especially given the grant funding levels of USFWS international species programs and the number of grants active at any given period. Consulting expertise could be engaged to service this function and assist USFWS on a periodic basis but evaluation continuity and uniformity may be sacrificed with temporary hires.

Increased evaluation capacity could allow GACF program staff to engage in more strategic prospective grant making and bring USFWS technical expertise to bear on critical issues facing great ape conservation in the field. Grant recipients appreciate the distinctive partnership that USFWS provides through communication and funding of specific categories of conservation activity and seek more technical interactions. An expanded staff could further enhance the successful direct relationships USFWS has with its grantees by reducing administration and interaction focused on paperwork and funding transactions.

While in the field, the evaluation team observed many cases where partners were able to meet with GACF staff to review concepts, grant results, potential funding needs, interaction with other stakeholders in the landscape and other substantive concerns. While some recipients work closely in this way with GACF staff at a technical level, others operate without close contact: So while this professional partner role is appreciated and strongly sought after, a few comments indicate even more need for this type of interaction. "USFWS behaves as a donor and not as a partner; we would like to work with USFWS as partner." (Landscape Leader, DRC). Many grantees seek more interaction and greater technical involvement by USFWS personnel. In Gabon, "there is no coordination nationally among USFWS grantees. USFWS is a victim of the competition among conservation groups. Would get better value for dollars if coordination [were] provided (Landscape Leader, Gabon).

4. USFWS and USAID lack the frequency and depth of communication required for mutual success of their respective objectives in Central Africa. The evaluation team observed a good level of communication between USFWS and USAID in Washington but strained interactions with USAID/CARPE field staff in Kinshasa and little communication with USAID's field mission in Rwanda. The evaluation team recognizes the separate objectives and cultures of the two branches of government and, to say the least, there is much room for improvement in terms of communication and interagency understanding. One critical observation is that USFWS appears to assume that communication with USAID Washington personnel suffices to ensure communication with USAID field staff. This does not appear to be the case. As noted elsewhere, USAID assigns an EGAT staff person part-time oversight of the relationship between CARPE and USFWS, but this support level is inadequate and has declined along with the role of Washington CARPE partners generally.

It is incumbent on USAID/Washington to assist USFWS in coordinating communication between Washington and its field staff and, when appropriate, to enlist USAID field staff in dedicating time and effort for grant reviews. Reviews of the proposals generally do not involve active consultation with the CARPE field staff, and this is logistically challenging and sometimes operationally impractical. On one hand, CARPE field managers already carry a heavy burden were not looking to play an active role in the review process. On the other hand, the evaluation found that just greater effort in information sharing and occasional input into grant decisions was highly desired by CARPE managers. One easy approach to ensure key personnel are informed is to develop a personnel checklist for specified reviewer participation. This should be included in a proposal scoring sheet so that the presence or absence of any critical agency partner is recorded and on file.

Conversely, USFWS could make better informed decisions if the CARPE program communicated conservation results more clearly to USFWS. GACF program officers articulated this point, “We, USFWS, would also appreciate the sharing of information with us on issues related to wildlife conservation in the CBFP. The web-based reporting structure is helpful, but perhaps USAID-Kinshasa could reach out from time to time to let us know about major developments and program issues related to wildlife conservation. In some ways, they are missing an opportunity to better communicate with us to improve their program and wildlife conservation in general.”

USG investments in great ape conservation depend on interagency coordination and communication regardless of the USAID transfer. The USFWS mission includes international engagement on endangered species conservation. CITES and ESA provide the mandates and precedent for USFWS’ international role. USFWS and USAID are in an interagency partnership that has enormous potential for global biodiversity conservation, yet based on the team’s observations for the CBFP/GACF grants, the agencies seem to have barely scratched the surface for meaningful collaboration. Since only DRC and Rwanda have any USAID presence, the team was unable to assess whether USAID-USFWS collaboration in other areas of Africa would provide useful lessons for Central Africa.

5. *The GACF grant review process has no transparent and explicit great ape conservation strategy to guide funding investments.* The USFWS does employ an implicit programmatic strategy which is broadly guided by the GACF enabling legislation from Congress. The evaluation team as well as some of USFWS grantees is perplexed by the omission of a “programmatic compass.” “There needs to be an overarching “Great Ape Conservation Strategy” which gives priorities for Great Ape investments and which sites to work in and the USFWS should work with a strategy (WWF Landscape Lead, Gabon). With limited resources; it is incumbent on USFWS to develop a transparent strategy to prioritize funding approaches and areas. The benefits of an explicit strategy include the ability to measure results of investment at a composite scale, and make necessary course corrections; giving grantees a sense of fairness and trust in the grant making process; and increasing the agenda setting leadership role of USFWS amongst stakeholders and other funders. USFWS need not develop a program strategy in isolation of its stakeholders and can engage in a participatory process with key actors in the great ape conservation community.

An essential aspect of developing a great ape strategy is assessing the donor landscape of actors and priorities and determining where external donors can support USFWS programmatic goals. (see donor strategy in Annex 10). “USFWS needs to do a donor assessment in regions where it works.” (WWF Program Office, Gabon) In fact, the USFWS has actively encouraged, participated in, and funded conservation action plans for most of the Great Ape subspecies in Africa. These action plans are used by proposal reviewers in guiding grant making decisions. Additionally, the USFWS has supported the development of a series of Best Practices Guidelines for Great Ape Conservation. Most of the Best Practices documents are written by grant recipients who base these guidelines on the experience of field projects supported by the GACF. GACF through its review process ensures incorporation of these Best Practices Guidelines where applicable in all of the projects it funds.

6. Beyond a great ape strategy, the USFWS may want to consider a cross-program species strategy to enhance the success of its funding efforts in the field. The evaluation team observed some duplication of investment where more than one USFWS species fund operated in the same geographic area. For instance, in Central Africa, the evaluation team visited field projects that were funded by both the great ape and elephant conservation funds to protect the same habitat; to support the same local conservation capacity; and to fund similar monitoring efforts. "When I arrived in Gabon, there were 20 USFWS grants at one time (gorilla, elephants, sea turtles); some not coordinated well; isolated approach; and without a programmatic strategy" (Country Director, Gabon) The grants are flexible and demand driven, but at times, the grantees themselves lack adequate strategic coherence in the field.

To be fair, the evaluation team did not have the time or ability to investigate the level and degree of overlap between funds. Nevertheless, a stove pipe approach to species funding in the Congo Basin where elephants and great apes broadly overlap offers cross-programming opportunities. "USFWS grants (both gorillas and elephants) have to be part of some bigger strategy" (Former Country Director, WCS, Gabon).

The evaluation team recommends that the USFWS develop a cross-species program element of its great ape conservation strategy. USFWS may want to consider creating a multi-species fund field coordinator position to be stationed in a strategic regional location in Central Africa. This position would not only assist in field coordination of great ape, elephant and sea turtle efforts but also play a key role in coordinating USFWS efforts with other USG field personnel, international donors, local governments and other stakeholders.

7. Bundling connected grants can streamline administrative burden for both grant-seekers and grant-maker. In the absence of bundling grants, some grant-seekers are overwhelmed by paperwork and process and others see it as an opportunity to try to game the system for more funding. "Functionally, grantees would split up activities to maximize grants received for field work" (Anon, Congo). The evaluation team reviewed a couple grants where multiple connected projects of the same grantee or multiple partnered grantees were funded. The evaluation team wondered why such submissions are not explicitly bundled together.

There is some risk that separate grants may be given to two organizations for nearly the identical project in the same geography at the same time. USAID CARPE also expressed concern that grantees inadequately distinguished CARPE and GACF funds. In such instances, the team was given an impression that the grantees were gaming the USFWS grant making process hoping to receive awards higher than the average amount per project. In another circumstance, five separate grants were given to one organization in the same geography for five complementary activities. In this instance, the grantee was complying with USFWS guidance but at an administrative cost to the grantee and grant maker. "WCS has 7-8 grants in the region for monitoring; can they be consolidated; we didn't know larger USFWS grant are available" (Science advisor, WCS program). In another example, "NNNP is special area and there are too many WCS submissions; need to streamline process." (Country Team Leader, Congo).

Bundling grant applications is a strategic and legitimate grant making tool to fund efforts that require additional support. The evaluation team recommends that USFWS considered bundling

complementary grants and include grant guidance language saying, for example, “if prospective grantees seek multiple partner funding or support for multiple aspects of the same project, please contact USFWS directly for approval prior to submission.” If, on the other hand, prospective grantees are using this approach without informing USFWS of this additive process and thus gaming the process, then USFWS needs to include an additional criterion in its grant review process that assesses the justification of such submissions. With a great ape conservation strategy as a compass, USFWS can transparently direct resources to specific areas through a grant bundling approach.

4.3.3 Recipients Experience with the Grants Process

The evaluation team listened carefully to GACF grantees. While there were diverse opinions on their experience with the grants process, there was nearly uniform agreement that the GACF is making a difference and is a valuable conservation program. For instance, reiterated in recent testimony by USFWS conservation partners to Congress: In regard to the Great Ape Conservation Act, Sally Jewell Coxe, the President of the Bonobo Conservation Initiative said in her testimony: “I can’t imagine what we would have done without it or what the prospects would be today for bonobos and the other great apes had it not been for the critical, catalytic, and timely support GACA has provided ... Without intensified efforts to protect them, great apes including bonobos may be extinct in the wild in a generation. The Great Ape Conservation Act is critical to prevent this tragedy. ”

For many grantees, USFWS Grants provide responsive and flexible support for on the ground conservation activities. The GACF provides an adaptable funding mechanism that is relatively accessible on a frequent basis and thus allows field programs to shift activities quickly as new priorities are identified. Flexibility was the key word that described most grantee interactions with the USFWS grants process. "USFWS provides flexible funding so it can support existing efforts. The grant application process is relatively easy to apply for compared to other grants." - (Station Director, Gabon).

In addition, grant recipients appreciate the distinctive partnership that USFWS provides through communication and funding of specific categories of conservation activity such as ecological monitoring, enforcement, capacity building and wildlife health. Beyond the transactional element of grants, many grantees articulated broad appreciation for the technical support and insights provided by USFWS program staff. Some grantees commented on specific project design innovations by USFWS program staff in addressing critical conservation needs in the field. "What we do, there is no competition in the conservation community. Richard Ruggiero (of USFWS) sought us out" (NGO Director, Cameroon).

As the USFWS international program is staffed by personnel with advanced technical training and actual hands-on field conservation experience, many grantees see the service element of the USFWS as a major asset. “We have more frequent communication with USFWS than USAID, especially for technical input with proposal submission. The interaction with USFWS program officers is rich and improves the quality of the proposal. Personal contact is important." (General Director IGCP, Rwanda)

Several grantees also expressed that the USFWS has still much room for improvement. Some grantees believe that the USFWS has a favorable bias toward a few specific grantees; so much so that some grant seekers have chosen not to apply as they perceive their submissions as having less chance of success. "Conversations with USFWS mainly focused on what we do bad and not good" (Regional Program Director, WWF, Cameroon). There is a perception among grantees, for example, that WCS receives an exceptional proportion of the overall funds. "My experience with USFWS is minimal [but] there is a heavy bias to WCS; WCS getting most grants; WWF doesn't feel it has a shot and thus did not apply." (International Staff WWF). The evaluation team probed deeper into these concerns and found that grant success rate based on the number of submissions per organization was relatively the same across all applicants who applied for multiple grants. It is true that WCS receives a disproportionately high percentage of the overall funding; however, WCS submits a large number of proposals and registers rejection rates on a par with other organizations. In other words, it appears that the more one applies the more chances of relative grant success. Those organizations with more grants actually applied more often. Furthermore, in the case of WCS, its mission is closely aligned with the general orientation of the CBFP GACF foci (as with other USFWS multinational species grants). That much said, there are historic and institutional factors that can create conditions for a single grantee to dominate the program in a given landscape or country which creates a potentially unreflective tendency to approve follow-on grants less critically to protect or solidify previous investment. Over time, these grantees may no longer retain the effective advantage that they may have originally offered and periodic program-wide assessments are recommended to monitor changes in organizational and project effectiveness.

Better-funded organizations such as CI may decide the grant submission effort is not worth the effort. WWF staff in both CARPO and US offices, were divided on participation in the GACF but felt at times like USFWS viewed them more as another potential donor than as potential funds recipient. One WWF staff was willing to point the mirror at their own organization, "WWF efficiency decreased with project administration with USFWS transfer from WWF US to Gland WWF HQ to WWF CARPO offices in Yaoundé." (Anon, WWF). Better communication and clearer strategic guidance will help USFWS address this issue.

Beyond this, the lack of multi-year grants or the perceived lack of multi-year grants was a common issue among some grantees. "Funding cycles are too short; for many projects, just getting the equipment into the country can take over six months." (Country Director, Congo). "USFWS one year grants are frustrating. I recommend multiple year grants to help build capacity. Short term grants should be given as seed funds to develop efforts." (Station Director, Gabon). "Our experience with USFWS is challenged by the one year grant versus the long term conservation timeframe; it is a problem when you start an effort and the funding ends" (Chief of Party, Rwanda). While most grantees expressed a desire for the option of multi-year support, they did understand the constraints on USFWS funding. "The upside of one year funding is that it allows you to work on specific targets" (Landscape Lead, Gabon).

In addition, USFWS grant application process is unevenly understood among grant seekers. Many grantees see USFWS grant making as a black box process with little transparency of its goals, its decision making procedure and any constraints that might affect the program. Knowledge about who can apply, levels of grants, priority themes and geographic regions is

poorly understood. In probing further, the evaluation team learned that many grantees feel that the USFWS does a less than adequate job of communicating its grant making process, and its strategic objectives. "There is some ambiguity of amounts they (USFWS) are willing to fund; for instance \$50,000 for one year as a limit is too low." (Country Director, Congo)

Equally, many grant applicants felt the feedback they received was invaluable in helping them to better conceptualize their own programs and objectives. Smaller organizations such as ABC and LAGA gained experience and refined proposals based on communication back and forth, and this was reported to be independent of whether a specific proposal received funding. Further GACF program officers, when in the field make it a point to meet with both successful and pending or unsuccessful applicants to improve communication and understanding. Individual letters to applicants are a consistent input into USFWS efforts to develop substantive professional relationships with partners.

However, some grantees still felt proposal feedback provided insufficient forward guidance. One organization received funding for 4 of 11 proposals submitted; they felt that the comments used for failing certain proposals sounded substantially identical to those getting funding, and that comments for rejected proposals did not sufficiently explain the reason the proposal was denied. Absent such feedback and in view of the size of the awards, the organizational resource and risk call into question the merit of preparing proposals. Also, at times responses from one submission cycle were so close to the next submission deadline that there was no time to respond to feedback on rejected proposals so as to redraft and resubmit them.

Sometimes issues relating to USFWS are a result of factors beyond their control. For instance, a few grantees relayed stories of funding delays with the first round of USAID transfer funds. "There was a long delay at the beginning of the CARPE transfer -- in April 2005 grant written; in July 2005 grant approved and then money arrived in May 2006. By this time, I left the project." (Research Station Director, Gabon). In another instance, "For USFWS, we have to spend money before we get first grant payment; we are not a bank" -- (Landscape Segment Leader, CAR).

In general, grantees that were funded by both USFWS and USAID/CARPE, were aware of differences between USFWS and USAID/CARPE funding priorities and restrictions. "USFWS funds ecoguards which USAID does not" (Project Director, Congo). "USFWS proposals target a specific field activity with a short time frame. USFWS funds ecoguards and WCS tops up per diems which CARPE does not do" -- (Country Director, Gabon). "USFWS provides catalyst funding to do a key survey or enhance law enforcement, something USAID does not do" (Landscape Lead, Gabon).

As many grantees are funded by both USFWS and USAID, there is a desire by some to have some uniformity between the USFWS and USAID grants and reporting process. "It would be desirable to have USFWS to be in line with USAID in measuring specific performances" -- (WCS Country Director, DRC). On the other hand, "Reporting for USAID CARPE is difficult in a region where internet access is difficult". "CARPE represents the worst type of reporting -- having to follow a specific template; not enough leeway. USFWS is in the middle in comparison" (Landscape Segment Leader, CAR).

By and large, where efforts were funded by both, a majority believed the USFWS process less administratively onerous and more technically rigorous than those associated with USAID cooperative agreements. "USFWS Proposal requirements are clear; no problem with what they are asking from us" (Country Director, Congo). Some grantees believed a grant received from USFWS added to their effort's credibility and was a source of pride beyond grant dollars received -- official USG validation. "With USFWS, you have to write a good proposal to succeed; there is pride in winning support; you have to earn the funding." (Landscape Lead, Gabon). For some grantees that have less proposal writing capacity (compared to large international NGOs), the USFWS proposal process is challenging. "There was a lot of bureaucracy in getting grant; getting DUNS number; guidelines very demanding; there were communication gaps in the submission process; then when we received the grant, there was a delay. I had to take personal loan and pay interest until grant came in. Even now there are always questions about the proposal. It's actually good that USFWS continues to ask questions with each submission. I like the fact that my donor is acting as a check and balance" (NGO Director, Cameroon).

Grantees expressed mixed concerns with their reporting experience. "USFWS does not provide feedback on reports" and our only "interaction with USFWS is twice a year through reports" -- (Landscape Lead, DRC). "USFWS receipt reporting is not straightforward." (Non-CARPE grantee, DRC) "We don't have trouble with USFWS; the reporting is straight forward; they definitely read and review proposals. Can't remember ever seeing comments on a technical problem, even we reported real problems in the implementation." (Country Director, Cameroon)

4.4 Grantee Performance in Achieving of Conservation Objectives

GACF and its USAID-supported grants lack an overt strategic framework or plan to guide its grant making (though strategic function seems implicit at some levels). With this lack of a transparent, well-articulated, and easily accessible strategic plan that establishes conservation priorities, it is difficult to define parameters for resource allocation and for assessing programmatic and grantee performance. The program as evaluated had no metrics against which to measure specific and institutional performance. The evaluation team detected and confirmed in interviews that a *de facto* vision and strategic selection of grants was being practiced. The preceding two findings sections of this report suggest that the lack of visibility and transparency of the fund's strategy negatively impacted collaboration with USAID and created some confusion among grantees about what types of proposals USFWS was interested in funding. Nevertheless, there are discernable if implicit patterns to the process of allocating and judging the success of the funds.

Most of the grants are programmatic field grants. These grants go directly towards specific operational level implementation, and as noted, in several circumstances, USFWS funding reaches parity with CARPE funding at the operational level.

Although the USFWS did not articulate explicitly its strategic areas of intervention, analysis of the grants and summary statements from the program suggest the following eight categories of grant support. Our analysis of grant results and impact are organized to reflect these strategic areas of intervention

4.4.1 Monitoring and Applied Research

Data-driven decision support approaches are a pillar necessary for achieving effective conservation. Given the immensity of the Congo Basin, the lack of conservation capacity in the region, and indications of declining great ape populations, it is essential to invest in science-based efforts that collect data on species, habitat, and conservation threats and effectiveness of conservation approaches.

"While the overall population of Great Apes in region is declining, there are many gaps in data and monitoring. We've not been able to pool data; there is no data clearinghouse; there is no decision support system." (International Staff based in Cameroon)

The GACF supports applied research efforts that employ the best and most feasible scientific approaches for species and ecological monitoring; that build monitoring and research capacity; and that advance innovation in conservation practice. In fact, USFWS is one of the few donors that supports conservation science activities across the region. "Ranger-based Monitoring was started with USFWS funding; and funded exclusively by USFWS; USFWS is a niche donor for IGCP." (General Director NGO, Rwanda)

There is ample evidence that USFWS GACF research investments to date have already increased the knowledge of various great ape populations across Central Africa. For example, both CARPE and USFWS contributed to a WCS-led survey that identified one of the largest recorded populations of western lowland gorillas, reported to be as high as 150,000 individuals in the Lac Tele landscape -- an area that straddles the Republic of Congo and DRC border. This population was found outside the existing protected area network in the region and highlights the conservation opportunities lying outside parks.

USFWS funded ape census surveys; spatially explicit habitat suitability models; ranger-based data collection methods; critical behavioral research and an array of threat analyses (e.g., impacts of hunting, bushmeat trade, logging, and roads) have been used to set conservation priorities for great ape populations. This has included input into several strategic conservation assessments such a great ape conservation priority effort for Western Equatorial Africa; a bonobo conservation planning effort for DRC and the production of Best Practice Guidelines for Great Ape Conservation through the IUCN Primate Specialist Group.

In this regard, grantees expressed greater desire for sharing best practices and exchange lessons regarding survey methods and data management amongst USFWS grantees. For instance, one WWF field director felt that USFWS could step in and help coordinate and standardize some data management issues by helping to share lessons across programs. Specifically cited was the proprietary "Management Information System" (MIST). MIST was being simultaneously adopted by one group and spawned by another based on wildly divergent assessment of the system's utility and viability in the Congo Basin. USFWS grants support both organizations. In other instances, USFWS also supports different technologies (cyber tracker, GPS/Ranger-Based Monitoring, etc) that are not compatible; recipient groups could benefit from a comparative assessment of methodologies and establishment of best practices.

From individual animal tracking to ground level transects to satellite-based remote sensing, data collection is an essential element in guiding conservation investments and actions. The USFWS GACF plays a critical role in building the foundation of great ape conservation knowledge.

4.4.2 Critical Habitat Protection

There are no great apes without secure suitable habitats and USFWS is supporting critical habitat identification and protection across all of Africa.

While the GACF/CARPE funds are focused on great apes as a flagship species, the GACA is also explicit in directing conservation funds to great apes “and their habitat.” Grants focusing on habitat conservation are primarily going toward protected area programs and, to a lesser extent to conservation of great ape habitat outside parks and protected areas. Grant funds support buffer zone conservation in surrounding communities and in forest concession zones such as the CIB concession in Kabo, Republic of Congo as part of the PROGEPP effort adjoining Parc National de Nouabalé-Ndoki.

Support to the Virunga landscape and especially to IGCP reinforced the conservation status of protected area habitat in Rwanda and, to a lesser extent, in the DRC. Mountain gorilla habitat in the Virungas is limited. The habitat lacks a buffer zone, and is surrounded by a hard edge perimeter by densely settled agricultural lands. USFWS grants have contributed to stabilizing pressures on the remaining habitat. For instance, GACF grants support Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International with dawn-to-dusk monitoring of 30% of all gorilla populations in Rwanda. Such monitoring vigilance is vital in maintaining habitat security for gorillas.

The Goualougou Triangle in the NNNP area of the TNS landscape of Congo represents another avenue in which USFWS support has formed a solid scientific and institutional foundation for the preservation of a near-pristine forest rich in great ape and other biodiversity that had been slated for logging. Without USFWS support, this habitat just recently featured in National Geographic would be less visible and subject to less conservation protection.

CARPE has systematically identified large landscape priorities for the Congo Basin. The macro-zoning of these CARPE large landscapes is not refined enough for detailed sub-area conservation management. USFWS grants provide the necessary details that make the CARPE designations more robust. USFWS fund the detailed surveys, and subsequent patrols, enforcement and management coordination that give substance to the governance and structure created by CARPE funding. Improving targeted support remains an ongoing concern in the grant review process. One grantee nonetheless asks, “Why does there appear to be more Great Ape conservation emphasis on gorillas than chimps?” Chimps are less vulnerable due to their fission and fusion behavior; more adaptable than gorillas and have a wider geographic range. Gorillas are sitting ducks in comparison. It would be wise to invest in areas where gorillas and chimps are sympatric. Outside of this, western chimp populations in the Guinea Highlands and the Tai Forest are a priority.” (Program manager, WWF)

For example, GACF funding helped AWF determine where to focus protected area development and great ape conservation efforts in the Maringa-Lapori-Wamba landscape in DRC through funding of targeted surveys using methodologies developed by other USFWS GACF partners. This information helped leverage USAID and other donor funding to the landscape. The landscape lead from AWF stressed how the landscape “infrastructure costs” meant the use of smaller grant funds such as those from GACF could go directly to field conservation activities, in this case leading to more precise and efficient definition of priority zones for conservation.

4.4.3 Species Recovery and Health

All great ape species are endangered, and overall population trends seem to indicate steady decline. In some areas, declines have been halted resulting in growth of isolated small populations that exhibit local success with census counts yielding numbers in the hundreds. Populations in decline are less resilient to disturbance and more susceptible to the cumulative impacts of ecological and health threats. Detrimental human impacts are driving great apes toward extinction. Species Recovery and Health should be a strategic pillar for any great ape conservation approach. The evaluation team was able to observe several USFWS funded efforts in the field and our findings may assist the USFWS in refining its efforts in this realm.

Eastern Gorilla Rehabilitation and Reintroduction: Through grants to MGVP, and DFGFI, the USFWS was asked to provide short term bridge funding for the rehabilitation of confiscated Eastern Gorillas in the Virunga region. USFWS funding supported captive Mountain Gorilla and Grauer's Gorilla in captive facilities in Kinigi Rwanda and Goma, DRC. The underlining objective of this support is to develop a program to reintroduction captive gorillas back into the wild. As part of this plan, funding included support for a regional vision for the management of confiscated gorillas in eastern DRC, Rwanda and Uganda.

Grantee reactions were mixed in reporting outcomes of these investments. From the vantage of the evaluation team, governmental and non-governmental interests and vision for long term gorilla rehabilitation seem out of alignment. MGVP had particular issues with the rehabilitation goals of ICCN in DRC. There was stated tension between MGVP and DFGFI over rehabilitation goals in DRC, especially with regards to the facility in Tayna operated by DFGFI. While USFWS supports most major great ape conservation players in the Virunga region, it has chosen not to play an independent broker role in bringing consensus amongst its diverse stakeholders. While neutrality is a worthwhile goal in some circumstances for a grant-maker, funding actors with divergent goals can exacerbate existing tensions and enhance conflict. There is an opportunity for USFWS to broker common agreement in such a situation.

What is clear to the evaluation team is that great ape rehabilitation requires a long term resource strategy. Individual animals need support on a multi-generational scale. USFWS grant process is designed with a shorter term outcome horizon. The USFWS may consider working with grantees to develop short term targets that assist grantees in reporting outcomes and enabling USFWS to justify funding long term efforts with short term time horizons.

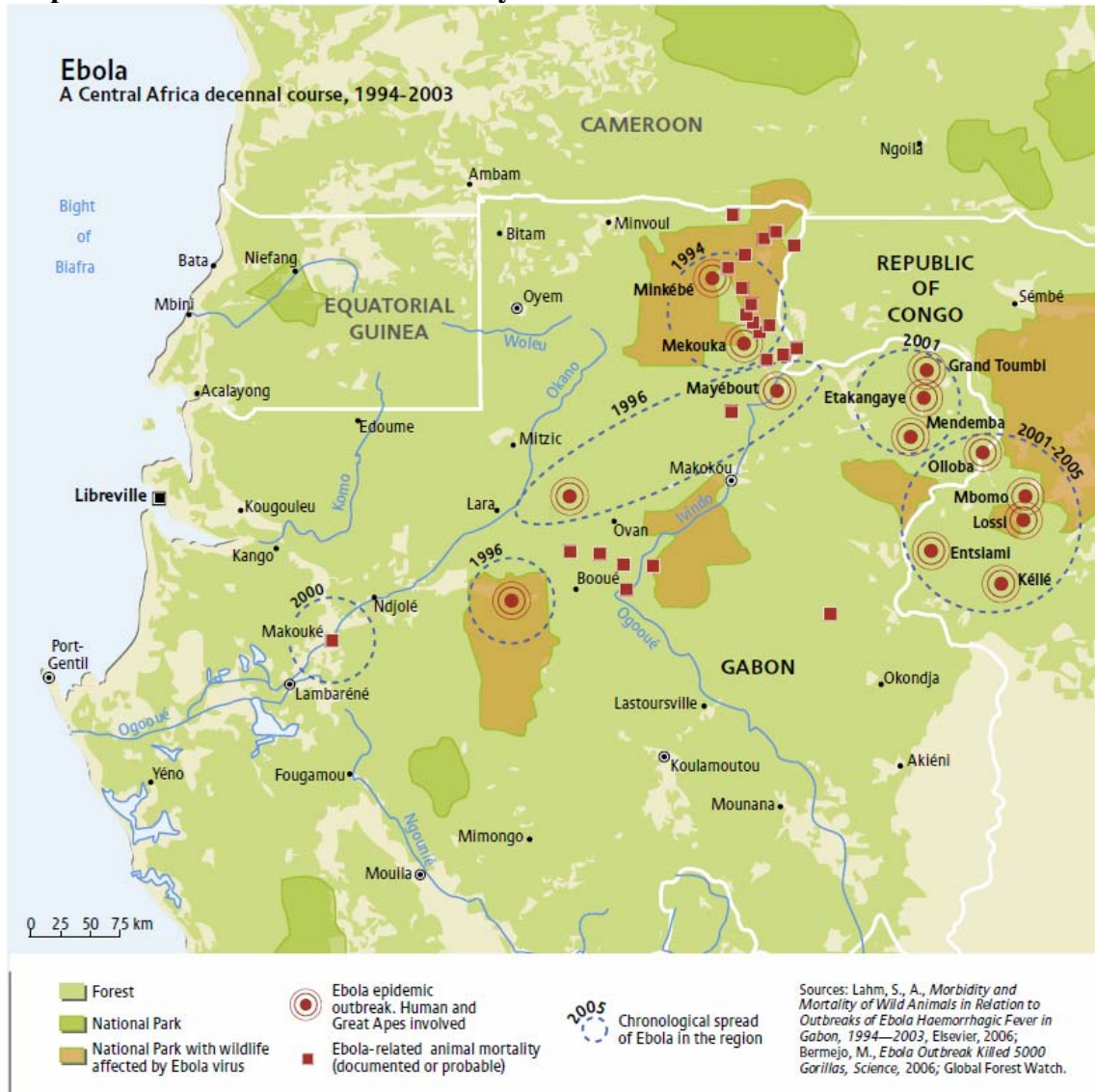
Great ape rehabilitation is a promising area of great ape species recovery. As individual great apes are long lived, investments in captive programs need sustainability planning. Short term

pulses of investment in long term captive efforts can have adverse consequences where a solution is additive to a problem. Should the USFWS seek to invest in this arena, we recommend that any grant seeker submit a sustainability plan for the long term care of individual animals or a recovery plan for the reintroduction of individual as is the practice with US-based endangered species recovery efforts.

Disease surveillance: In Gabon at the ZSL site in Mikongo with Lope National Park, we viewed an underutilized field laboratory. The facility was located in an area of Lope National Park (and for that matter in the country of Gabon) distant from monitored great ape populations. While it is laudable to have such facilities in the bush, they require constant care and maintenance to ensure optimal operation when need arises. "You can't do it for five years. long term effort, too complex; you can set up research facility but to sustain it is another matter." (Project Director, Gabon).

Diseases such as ebola hemorrhagic fever are a major threat to the survival of great apes in Africa. In regions where human and apes interact, there is concern for higher risk of spreading shared pathogens. As one expert commented, "Different primates in the same area share more disease than the same primates in different areas".

Map 3: Ebola outbreaks and mortality



(From Nellemann, C., I. Redmond, J. Refisch (eds). 2010 UNEP)

Disease surveillance capacity is very limited across the Congo Basin. This can be said for humans as well as great apes. Monitoring great ape disease dynamics requires a sophisticated network of collaborating health facilities across the region with trained personnel, coordinated sampling protocols and maintained diagnostic facilities plus a systematic disease sampling strategy devised by wildlife epidemiologists. The investment required to establish an effective disease surveillance program and maintain it over time is beyond the grant size and budget of the GACF. That much said, where there are well monitored great ape subpopulations such as in areas of ecotourism endeavors or long term research sites, localized wildlife health monitoring can be an effective conservation investment. Furthermore, in regions of known outbreaks, rapid response support can help assess disease impacts and develop strategies for disease control.

4.4.4 Governance and Enforcement

USFWS grants funds a diversity of conservation actors and actions that are not permitted or easily supported through the CARPE program. Importantly, FWS grants have contributed to international cross-border protected area management coordinating structures and programs. For example, GACF grants have supported improved transboundary management themes in several landscapes include those supporting protected area management's enforcement responsibilities.

Improving conservation managers' capacity to enforce regulations protecting critical great ape habitat was widely identified as a theme that USFWS GACF funds had supported and one in which the impact was tangible and significant.

"USFWS funds have been leveraged to support ecoguard patrols in Odzala." -- Pauwel de Wachter, WWF

"USFWS can be a law enforcement partner with us on CITES, and ESA." -- David Greer, WWF

"Accountability needs to be linked to wildlife code enforcement." -- David Greer, WWF

4.4.5 Conservation Outreach and Education

It is particularly challenging to determine the impact of USFWS support to efforts categorized as conservation outreach and education. The linkages from increased knowledge and awareness to changed attitudes and then to more conservation-centered practices are difficult even in long-term programs. Over the course of GACF grants, most programs are only able to systematically report more immediate changes in knowledge from before to after an intervention. To evaluate these efforts, primarily their contribution must be assessed in the context of a causal chain that is generally known to have an impact. USFWS have supported both standalone conservation outreach efforts and other grantee programs that have an outreach education component.

4.4.6 Training/Capacity Building/Technical Assistance

Sustaining conservation efforts over time is a function of investments in training and capacity building. The USFWS and its GACF have supported training and capacity building across all areas of its grant making efforts from monitoring and research to governance and enforcement. In many ways training and capacity building is a cross cutting theme that is integrated into many other technical programs.

For example, USAID GACF grants for surveying and monitoring great populations have been carried out for all species and in almost every country where grants intervene. These combined efforts have lead to extensive training from professional to field surveyor level staffs, to the definition of a set of best practices for great ape conservation managers and to the construction of a Regional Training Center in Lope National Park in Gabon. USFWS grants have partially

supported all aspects of this systematic application of an important methodology. As a result, surveys of ape populations are of comparable quality across sites, training needs can be readily identified, and more importantly, practitioners' understanding of great ape distribution has been substantially increased.

Training relies on sharing expert knowledge and technical assistance is often the method is use to deploy such information. The GACF provides technical assistance in two main ways. First, it does so through grants to support technical expertise within NGOs, and governments or through individuals/consultants. Second, the USFWS does so through deploying its own highly qualified technical staff. The professional personnel of USFWS and its WWB are an asset that is highly valued by the great ape conservation community and GACF grantees. By using its own capacity, the USFWS is contributing to the mission of great ape conservation through substantial non-monetary assistance to its grantees. This non-monetary assistance includes both management-oriented and field-related assistance. Some examples of USFWS staff inputs includes strategic planning advice; the development of performance measures; the facilitation of collaboration; providing expertise on addressing specific field conservation challenges; and sharing research and best practices. To some degree, all WWB programs provide similar support services, and the Service is looking to expand cross-program synergies.

4.4.7 Strategic Planning/Best Practices Development and Dissemination

USFWS grants build rapport among operational level implementers of Great Ape conservation. USFWS staff and grantees have regular contact through proposal preparation, grant reporting and other interactive levels of communication. Such networking at the operational level has greatly strengthened USFWS capacity to play a more strategic role among the great ape conservation community. Despite its small size the GACF program management has already achieved substantial outcomes at the strategic level, which translate or can be expected to translate to conservation outcomes in the field. Strategic support can come in the form of direct grant support, networking and participation in strategic planning exercises, and serving as a catalyst and has addressed such themes as:

- Best practices guidelines
- Regional action plans for different Great Ape species
- Program coordination among partners

The *Best Practices Guidelines* are an ongoing area of support for the Division and one that is funded by both CBFP GACF funds and USFWS GACF funds. These guidelines, with partial funding from GACF, are the product of the IUCN/SSC Primate Specialist Group. Specialists have developed them to address critical issues in great ape conservation based on a consensus of best practices for field conservationists. Each publication provides up-to-date guidance for scientists working on a daily basis with great apes, as well as for the many development organizations, donors and government agencies that are involved in great ape conservation. So far guidelines have been or are being produced that address reducing impacts of logging, reintroduction of great apes, for surveys and monitoring of great ape populations, for great ape tourism and for mitigating human – great ape conflict.

In addition to providing direct support for these consensus documents, many of the contributors to these publications have been the beneficiaries of GACF grants. For example, under WCS Fiona Maisels received multiple grants to develop, support and extend survey and monitoring methodologies. Dr. Maisels is a key contributor to the related IUCN/SSC publication. Similarly, the guidelines addressing one of the primary threats to great ape survival – commercial logging – are largely authored and based on research carried out by David Morgan and Crickette Sanz in the TNS landscape and supported for nearly a decade by USFWS grants.⁹ For the last four years, this work received CBFP GACF funding.

The Regional Action Plans have also received support from the USFWS GACF, though much but not all of it thus far has been outside the USAID funding. This ongoing work will require not only the elaboration of additional plans but a continuous effort to update and refine prior plans. The evaluation noted that USFWS is helping lay the groundwork for the production of a bonobo plan and is currently involved in the furthering strategic work to advance the regional action plan for the conservation of the Cross River gorilla. The team examined the Cross River action plan and interviewed field staff on the usefulness of the plan. The five year plan stemmed from a 2006 workshop. It provides a state of the art informational summary of the Cross River gorilla populations, their habitat and corridors and provides a summary action program with a planned \$4.6 million budget that addresses a range of issues including boundary demarcation, legal, institutional, research, enforcement and others. The plan helped field partners to seek funding, which to some extent was met with USFWS grants, but as with bonobos, the conservation partners seemed to require an external catalyst to further the strategic development process.

The USFWS GACF, as a respected government agency, does not directly compete with its NGO partners, is seen by the NGOs for the most part as a neutral broker, and thus embodies a power to convene and focus NGO around key themes. In addition to support for best practices and action plans, USFWS has exercised this power to convene and catalyze implementing NGOs to further their conservation agenda. The evaluation found that these efforts were consistent with CBFP and CARPE goals and objectives whether focused on CARPE landscapes or on applying lessons from CARPE to other non-CARPE landscapes.

Through GACF, USFWS was playing a significant role as a strategic catalyst in several geographic and thematic areas. The team, for example, observed USFWS playing a more strategic role in the trans-boundary Virungas landscape, coordination of bonobo conservation groups, developing a landscape approach in the Cross River zone, refocusing strategic support in Northern Congo, and exploring a more active role for government in conservation partnerships in Gabon. From a USAID standpoint the transfer results in overhead costs being shifted from one agency to another with some loss in efficiency and with duplicate efforts that could have been combined. This was reported to our team as experienced by USAID primarily as a “loss” where added value is not recorded. USFWS often plays this catalytic role in areas where USAID is not active or where presence or involvement is limited – the Virungas, bringing TL2 into the bonobo

⁹ Interestingly, Goulougo Triangle Ape Project received the first award of the Great Ape Conservation Award of 2000 and report that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have not only increased the conservation status of chimpanzees and gorillas in northern Congo. They credit visionary leadership and persistent follow through as being responsible for the results that are now being generalized among practitioners.

mainstream, working with non-CARPE NGOs, spreading CARPE partner landscape approaches to non-CARPE landscapes. With improved understanding USAID could better recognize the overall USG benefit not only through direct GACF grants support for strategic planning but also from this less defined role as a catalyst in developing a larger network of practitioners.

4.4.8 Fostering Innovative Opportunities

Through such networking and longstanding relationships with the conservation community, USFWS has been able to identify and strengthen a group of less-established researchers, smaller international and local NGO's, and indirectly, a cadre of host country conservation practitioners.

Some USFWS grants provide seed funding that encourages innovation, start-up pilot efforts and entrepreneurial activity. One recipient stated, "USFWS is open to innovation or efforts out of the ordinary," and that without such proactive, entrepreneurial efforts, the program would never secure funds. (Executive Director, ABC) These can be technical in nature such as support to research on real time cell phone transmission of unauthorized human entry into protected areas or economic as in the case of building capacity such as that of INCEF in using innovative video tools in behavior change programs.

USFWS funded an innovative experiment in communication by supporting the inclusion of gorilla conservation messages in the context of a local radio drama series presented by the Population Media Center. Beginning 2006, 301 episodes on two rural radio channels were broadcast and will terminate with 312. Interest is high, and a second related and expanded series may result. The mainstreaming of conservation and linking it with other sectors in popular culture is having some measure of success based on feedback.

The GACF provides grants to numerous ecotourism initiatives, most of which include efforts to further great ape habituation. Habituation of lowland gorillas, bonobos remains experimental. This amounts to support for ecotourism R&D, which is a precondition to attracting long term private sector investment in sustainable (conservation-based) ecotourism.

Ecotourism is an innovative approach to conservation funding and sustainability, but comes with some risks and uncertainty. Ecotourism is drawing large numbers of visitors to Rwanda and to a lesser extent to the surrounding mountain gorilla populations in Uganda (Bwindi) and Congo (where official tourism has just restarted). Permits are lucrative and attract support for protected areas programs. At 100 permits per day (Uganda (44) and Rwanda (56) subscribed. Ave # group x 100 = x gorillas of 720 visited per day. + researcher groups visited per day.) Visitation may be overburdening gorilla populations in the region. One asks, are they still in the wild? Long-term impact of this intense human ape contact is not fully understood.

A high percentage of mountain gorillas are or are being habituated. Some are habituated for research but more and more are being made available for gorillas tracking. The impact on these populations is unknown but the risks to them are increased by this increasingly omnipresent tourism even as it finances conservation in the hosting countries.

USG direct development support to other governments in the region is minimal. The USAID program operates through a set of NGO and USG partners and is limited with what can be done directly, even with DRC government. CARPE cross-cutting support institutions, such as US Forest Service are establishing technical links to governments, but under the CARPE structure they are restricted from providing direct financial support. Department of State remains involved in the CBF and engages governments in the region but with minimal staff and resources, efforts are mostly centered on a few policy issues. The team found national government staff in several countries highly interested in playing a more direct implementer role in the GACF program. For example, the Gabon Director of Fish, Game and Aquatic Resources suggested that their staff could work with forestry concessions to establish new, non-national park, protected areas in zones of high conservation value within the concessions. The NGO grantees also felt USFWS could play an important government role that NGOs could not meet. One landscape lead noted the, "Gabon government has no clear understanding of how USFWS funding works and there has been no engagement with the higher levels of government outside the lower levels at the Ministry of Wildlife." (GACF grantee/CARPE landscape lead, Gabon). The evaluation team found that USFWS had identified this opportunity and was seeking within available resources, to develop direct government links including with the government of Gabon. Direct grants to government where accountability requirements can be met represent an example of how the program seeks and develops not only technical but also institutional, innovative opportunities.

5. KEY CONCLUSIONS

5.1 General Conclusions

The GACF program in Central Africa has evolved steadily to a point where a stronger institutional presence in the region and across grants is merited. Given the GACF's limited resources even with the additional USAID transfer monies, an expanded USFWS institutional role has greater likelihood of success if it is part of an overall coordinated effort of the broader Wildlife Without Borders program. A wider DIC review of expanding USFWS presence in the region is merited.

Among USG agencies, USFWS is best-placed to administer conservation species-focused grants for great ape species and species' habitat in Central Africa. The focus on flagship species with substantial habitat requirements can catalyze and focus attention on core protected area and conservation management issues within larger landscapes.

The available resources to support the Great Ape Conservation Fund are inadequate to the challenges and would benefit from a more explicit approach toward attracting financing into priority activities supported by the GACF.

USFWS is a permanent government agency with a long term mandate in Central Africa. If CARPE funding changes priorities or stops, USFWS support at some level can be expected to continue, thus a long-term strategy should anticipate the maturing and phase-out of the 20-year CARPE effort.

5.2 Conclusions on Transfer Mechanism

Communication regarding GACF/CARPE grant program is weak and undercuts potential efficiency and effectiveness at the operational level in landscapes. USFWS GACF lacks explicitly structured processes that would ensure such communication. De facto communication assured from earlier staff and grant procedures has weakened with time and changes in personnel.

Based on the operational successes of the grants and the perceived complementarity of the two agencies field activities, efforts to improve communication and collaboration between them are warranted. Programs funded by each enhance the results of the other.

5.3 Conclusions on grant management process

USFWS, USAID and their international initiatives will mutually benefit from greater communication and coordination. As programs evolve, as staffing changes, and as priorities shift, communication is essential in efficiently delivering limited USG services over a wide geographic area and funding directly to field-based efforts.

Communicating ideas clearly and succinctly is a critical function of a proposal or a report and this should be fostered through more precision in the proposal and reporting process which will assist USFWS in the review of proposed efforts and outcomes delivered. Greater precision in proposal and report design can also assist the USFWS in archiving and retrieving data with a timeliness that allows the GACF to serve as an important conservation database for Great Apes.

The USFWS Great Ape Conservation Fund could foster the development of a coherent and coordinated Great Ape Conservation Strategy across all scales of implementation for local site-based efforts to national and regional levels of activity throughout the Congo Basin.

5.4 Conclusions on Achieving Conservation Objectives

Despite their relatively small scale and low profile to date, the USFWS CARPE grants are critical to enabling conservation partners to meet important conservation objectives. Grant size is not an indication of grant success as many small grants given by the GACF have yielded highly leveraged outcomes; successful conservation outcomes often result from a partner's larger, ongoing conservation efforts to which the grants make significant, sometimes critical contributions.

The GACF program is more than just a limited collection of unrelated small grants to a narrow group of conservation NGOs.. These grants have leveraged more than the resources attributed to the specific direct matches by grant applicants. There is field-based evidence that USFWS investments have indirectly leveraged other large donor conservation infrastructure projects (such as ECOFAC and CARPE) throughout Central Africa. Based on the grantees' ability to adapt funding to these varied contexts, USFWS appropriately funds single (one-off), clustered and sequential grant-making strategies.

Where USFWS grants reach some degree of concentration in coverage, on average say three or more grants provided in a CARPE landscape, USFWS has the potential to develop its own thematic or landscape program strategy. A distinction could be explicit between GACF and CARPE grants and those targeted at an explicit GACF priority program. Priority programs could evolve over time and help grants lead to measurable longer term conservation outcomes. While not specifically, spelled out as a strategy, many grants already follow this pattern

By focusing grants, USFWS is capable taking a strategic lead and core donor role for limited periods in selected landscapes, as they have done to some extent, in the Virunga landscape in the past and do so currently in the Congolese portions of the TNS landscape. Outside of CARPE, USFWS funds Cross River and the new landscape, TL2 in DRC. There is capacity to increase and refine this strategic approach to selecting grants -- in essence making USFWS a sort of venture capital funder in these circumstances.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS/LESSONS LEARNED

6.1 General recommendations

All stakeholders need to work together to increase support. Great ape conservation is a long term endeavor that will require continuing advocacy of US government support for great ape species conservation programs. Great apes are primate species of global conservation concern. Their numbers are in decline. Yet, they provide a positive identity to a region of world where there is sadly too little attention paid to the plight of both the human and ecological condition. The USFWS is the most important bilateral government undertaking that is designed to and specifically targets the conservation of great ape species. The GACF, if nothing else, serves as an example of how one nation can choose a more proactive approach to change the trajectory of conservation events.

Partners and stakeholders need to continue and expand advocacy of US government support for great ape species conservation programs. The USFWS is the only bilateral government funding effort targeting the conservation of great ape species. The GACF, if nothing else, serves as an example of how one nation can choose a more proactive approach to change the trajectory of conservation events.

USFWS needs to develop an updated and comprehensive Great Ape conservation strategy to guide its grant making activities. Strategic planning should include stakeholder engagement and employ the best available science. The USFWS Great Ape strategy should be periodically revised to reflect the dynamic challenges facing Great Ape conservation on the ground.

Systematic sharing of programming prioritization and synopsis of grant awards should be communicated regularly to CARPE/Kinshasa (and other concerned USAID operating units).

FWS should produce a revised format for grantee submissions and reporting that link grants to core CARPE results and to other strategic GA conservation priorities.

USFWS needs to create a standardized, preferably web-based, common application form with predetermined narrative word limits and metadata identifiers for proposals and reports. Any additional rich data and findings can be included in addenda. Funded proposals, mid-term and final reports and other products emanating from GACF support should retroactively be posted to the internet and publicly available.

USFWS should play an explicit and proactive role in convening stakeholders around GACA (and related) conservation objectives.

USFWS needs to expand its interactional donor role, which would be helped by adding staff and improving coordination between GACF program and administrative functions. As a hub of Great Ape Conservation in the Congo Basin, USFWS, beyond making grants, can enable cross-fertilization of ideas; devise initiatives that synthesize findings and best practices; develop efforts that advance policy, resourcing, science and capacity building across the entire range of Great Ape conservation.

USFWS should establish an information and communication strategy that 1) builds networks within the Great Ape conservation and donor community; 2) shares results across these stakeholder groups; 3) profiles grant activities and field programs; 4) communicates strategic priorities and information about the GACF; and 5) makes outreach material available to the general public through the internet and other media.

Increase involvement of national governments in GACF program. Expand and further develop a proactive approach to capacity building, particularly of national staffs, that leads toward direct government to government grants.

Establish substantive and geographic priorities for grants. For example, in the short term, pull back from blanket support to ecotourism to focus on higher potential sites where investment in habituation programs is a precondition to a viable higher value tourism market.

6.2 Recommendations on Transfer Mechanism

USAID should increase the speed of both the signing of an annual memorandum of agreement and transfer of funds to the USFWS to ensure sufficient time is allowed to program available funding.

USFWS should prepare periodic summaries of the recently approved and recently completed *grants for general communication to CBFP stakeholders*. In particular, these should be shared on a timely basis with CARPE management. As part of the effort, USFWS could select extract elements from grantee reporting that management implications for the CARPE Kinshasa office (or other field-based CARPE personnel).

USAID/CARPE should endeavor to use an improved understanding of the GACF grant operations and results to improve its own management of the land use planning efforts in each of the affected landscapes. By benefiting from USFWS coordination and management of the grants and the range of activities they are able to support could offset what are perceived as lost resources allocated to the USFWS program administration.

USAID and USFWS should clarify the geographic and species requirements for future funding under a biodiversity funds transfer. If the scope of the transfer is expanded many of the CARPE specific recommendations and findings in this report could be applied to improving collaboration and coordination in other parts of Africa where both agencies play a role. This coordination could also be instructive to other federal agencies involved in African biodiversity conservation.

6.3 Recommendations on grant management process

Streamline and standardize reporting formats. Existing proposal outline categories should have defined character or word limits with a focus on brevity. All proposal submissions and reports should have fixed page lengths in set page margins, font and type size.

Proposal narratives should be no longer than five pages (preferably three) plus supporting materials and financials. Essential material such as that covering budget and key personnel would not count toward the narrative.

The USFWS should require all submissions to be provided online. This would assist personnel in sharing information with reviewers, archiving information in databases, enabling staff and researchers to perform periodic evaluations, conducting synthesis review of findings and information and communicating results and activities.

The USFWS may want to consider keyword tagging on all proposals and reports to assist in future metadata analysis of proposals and outcomes reported.

The team recommends that USFWS consider recruiting an evaluation/knowledge management specialist (one FTE) to assist Species Fund Program Officers in reviewing reports as a collective across several species funds. Such a position can be augmented with contractual assignments to analyze grants data and develop synthesis review assessments.

The evaluation team strongly recommends a strategic planning exercise for the GACF that includes partners such as USAID, other governmental agencies, international donors and external great ape conservation expertise. The USFWS is putting in place an advisory group for Great Apes and the other multinational species funds that will help address the need for strategic guidance to the program. To expand upon this effort, the USFWS may also seek to consult with the National Academy of Science or IUCN in developing a strategy using the best science and elevating the profile of great ape conservation in the process. In the end, the USFWS needs a strategy that should be posted on its web page and accessible to the public.

6.4 Recommendations on Achieving Conservation Objectives

Require grantees to better establish and justify logical links of short term grants to longer term conservation objectives. Grantees should include and report on progress and where possible impact indicators in this effort.

Grantees should improve data management capacity. USFWS should support an effort to establish best practices and lessons learned for ranger patrol data collection and management. This could be integrated into training efforts such as those provided at the Lope regional center.

Work with grantees to establish criteria for judging success of field efforts including the development or adoption of appropriate indicators for the scale and duration of the effort.

7. ANNEX

See separate file, Volume 2