

July 6, 2008

Dr. Richard Huber
Principal Environmental Specialist
Department of Sustainable Development
Organization of American States
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Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Richard,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the request for proposals that address the need to develop integrated Value Added Tools for IABIN. In response to your letter dated June 18, 2008, we would like to provide additional clarification on the two points that the selection committee has identified:

1. *The prospects and plans for expanding this important tool to additional regions, such as South America.*

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) recognizes that measuring progress towards conservation goals requires a tremendous investment in data and reporting systems. For this reason, TNC has recently invested over \$1M in server hardware, GIS software, and support staff to set up a global network of Conservation Information System (CIS) data nodes. This enterprise level of data nodes has been strategically set up around the world to provide seamless access to core datasets that integrate biological and socio-economic spatial data including priority conservation habitats, species, threats, and protected areas. Data nodes serving Latin America and the Caribbean include the Mesoamerica & Caribbean Region (MACR) data node, located in San José, Costa Rica, and the South America Conservation Region (SACR) data node, located in Quito, Ecuador. Each data node is managed by a Regional CIS Manager who oversees the development of the standardized core datasets by GIS staff in each of the conservation programs that make up a region. The MACR and SACR programs meet together on a regular basis to discuss and coordinate activities relating to the integration of new data and how to provide users better access to data and reporting/visualization tools.

The CIS framework that TNC has established provides an excellent platform for IABIN to expand the Internet-based GIS Ecosystem Assessment and Reporting Tool beyond pilot sites located in Mesoamerica & Caribbean Region. In addition to these areas, we propose this tool be tested and delivered with prototype ArcSDE databases from two ecoregions located within the South America Conservation Region. We will coordinate with key staff including the South America CIS Manager (Leonardo Sotomayor) and external partners working in South America (e.g. NatureServe) to design the required data model that integrates IABIN's Ecosystem and Protected Area databases, load the

supporting datasets, and implement and test the tool. The South American ecosystem and protected area GIS data are good candidates for integration into the tool since pilot projects for reporting conservation status measures using key indicators (such as the status of biodiversity, threat, and management effectiveness) have previously been developed for several areas in South America at a variety of scales. The Rocky Mountain Conservation Region (RMCR), which covers seven western U.S. states, has also expressed interest in adapting their ecosystem and protected area data to fit the model that will be developed for this tool. TNC will also work closely with NatureServe during the development of the data model so that Ecosystem Thematic Network data can be integrated and used by the tool. Working towards a common goal of making biodiversity information useful to decision-makers in both the public and private sectors, TNC will work with partners to expand the scope of this work to include South America, integrating IABIN's Ecosystem and Protected Area Thematic Network data into TNC's core conservation datasets for several sites throughout Latin America and the Caribbean and the Western US.

2. The training strategy and distribution for the tool following completion of the products developed. Select IABIN funds may be available to assist with this task.

In addition to completing and testing the tool using a variety of datasets from pilot sites across the Western Hemisphere, it is proposed that TNC implement the following training strategy upon completion of the project. Select IABIN funds that are used to carry out this training and outreach strategy will be matched with TNC dollars in a 1:1 ratio:

- 1) Set up a **tool website** (e.g. <http://www.effectiveconservation.org>) that can be linked to IABIN's website, where users will be able to download the tool for *a*) installation and use on a local machine use; or *b*) access the on-line version that queries a remote database of ecosystems and protected areas. The website will be available in both English and Spanish. TNC will maintain this website working with the University of Southern Mississippi.
- 2) Write an easy-to-read **User Manual** and accompanying **Tutorial with Sample Datasets** that fully explain how to use the tool for estimating and reporting effective conservation of an ecosystem. Several example datasets will be showcased that represent conservation decision-making in the different realms (terrestrial, freshwater, and marine). These documents will be translated into both English and Spanish.
- 3) Conduct a **series of training sessions** in strategic locations to be determined by IABIN. TNC routinely conducts training throughout Latin America, so one idea is to conduct these trainings so they coincide with previously planned events. It is proposed to conduct one training in each major geography including Central America (e.g. Panama City), South America (e.g. Quito), the Caribbean (e.g. Kingston), and the Western US (Boulder, CO).
- 4) TNC will also **promote the use** of this tool through announcements on conserveonline.org and presentations at regular learning exchange workshops and conferences throughout Latin America and US.

- 5) TNC will commit to **maintain and update** the tool as future software developments become available.

Again, we appreciate the opportunity to respond to this important matter and look forward to hearing from you.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven R. Schill". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Steven R. Schill, Ph.D.
Regional Senior Scientist
The Nature Conservancy
Meosamerica & Caribbean Region