

Liberia
East Nimba Nature Reserve Forest Conservation Project
News from the Field

August 2016
Conservation International

Conservation Agreements

During the last quarter, CI focused on formulating Conservation Agreements detailing the conservation activities and benefits identified in talks so far with the communities. CI was thus able to complete the negotiations of Conservation Agreements with the Gbopaye and Yolowee communities on the border of the East Nimba Nature Reserve. Preparation is currently being carried out for the scheduled signing of the agreements in September. Once the agreements have been signed, the communities and CI will begin projects aimed at sustainable development of the villages. The Conservation Agreements will be reviewed each year and the necessary changes made.

In exchange for the benefits they will receive, the communities have agreed on the following conservation activities:

- Forgoing extraction of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) in the East Nimba Nature Reserve
- Forgoing hunting activities in the East Nimba Nature Reserve
- Forgoing hunting of protected species in forests surrounding the East Nimba Nature Reserve
- Forgoing farming or other agricultural activities in the East Nimba Nature Reserve
- Forgoing the use of fire in the East Nimba Nature Reserve and surrounding forests
- Forgoing unsustainable fishing practices (such as the use of mosquito nets, dynamite, poison, etc.)
- Participating in forest management activities to enhance protection of the East Nimba Nature Reserve

As benefits, the Yolowee community considered a swamp rice production project while Gbopaye wanted support for both swamp rice production and palm oil cultivation. However, since the rainy season is already well under way, swamp rice cultivation was deemed not suitable for this year. After several meetings and consultations with relevant local experts, the two communities have settled on livestock production and Frontline Conservationist jobs for former hunters as the main livelihood projects under the agreements.



Many communities still rely on hunting in the forest for food



Members of the Yolowee community who participated in the negotiations of the Conservation Agreements

Frontline Conservationists

Hunting will be severely restricted under the Conservation Agreements. Previously, a total of 33 people in the Yolowee and Gbopaye communities depended on hunting as their primary livelihood, so they stand to lose a significant portion of this livelihood because of the Conservation Agreements. The agreements also require everyone in the village to change their habits. It is important to encourage everyone to abide by the stipulations of the agreements so that they can receive the benefits from the following year onwards. By retraining as Frontline Conservationists, former hunters will be provided with an alternative livelihood that sees them transition into a new role as forest guardians. Frontline Conservationists will be trained to perform the following duties under the Conservation Agreements:

- Monitor the forests around the East Nimba Nature Reserve to ensure compliance and to collect important biological data
- Help manage any conflict between people and wildlife
- Conduct awareness and outreach activities with communities on conservation and sustainable management



A hunter in the East Nimba Nature Reserve



Former hunters in other communities have already started retraining as Frontline Conservationists

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