

China
Agroforestry in the Mountains of Southwest China
News from the Field

August 2016

Conservation International

Planting of Fruit Trees and Vegetables

April is the best time for planting in Ganpu village. Started in March, saplings of apple, fig, cherry, plum, persimmon, pear-date, walnut, Chinese pepper, and other kinds of trees were planted in the demonstration field. Most of the apple, cherry, plum, and walnut saplings came into bud in June, but others are still recovering from the transplant. Chili, tomato, and several kinds of beans including white bean, lima bean, soy bean, black bean, and red phaseolus bean were planted under the trees.



Full view of the agro-forestry demonstration site (© Wang Heng)



Monitoring the growth of saplings (© Liang Bo)

Livestock Raising and Compost Plan Settled and Facility Construction Underway

Experts from Chengdu Science Academy of Agriculture and Forestry and Junqiao eco-farm, along with project staff and consultants, discussed the plan for livestock-raising with partners from the Forestry Bureau and Ganpu villagers. Participants settled on a plan for livestock-raising,

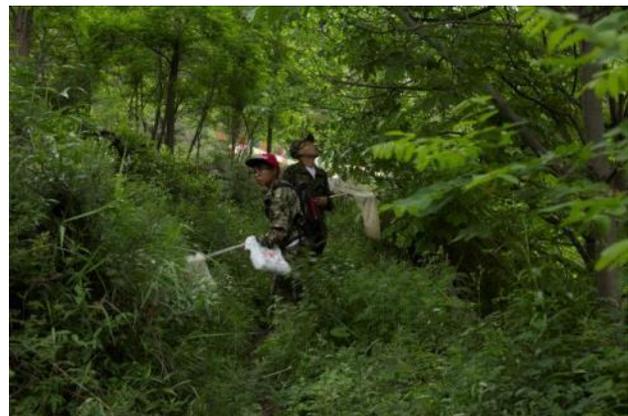
including the design of related facilities. Construction of facilities for hog-raising and composting began in May and was scheduled for completion in early July. The rail and housing for chickens was to be completed by August.



Construction of livestock housing and septic tank (© Jin Yan)

Carbon Storage and Biodiversity Surveys Conducted

Biodiversity and carbon storage monitoring surveys were conducted in May 2016. The 2015 surveys were conducted in April but this year they were conducted one month later because in April the demonstration site was busy with planting, which disturbed the regular activities of birds and insects. To make the 2015 and 2016 results easier to compare, the investigators surveyed the same locations in both years.



Biodiversity monitoring (© Jin Yan)

Agricultural Products Survey Conducted

The selling of products harvested from the agro-forestry demonstration field would be crucial for the sustainable development and promotion of the system. Therefore, an agricultural product survey was carried out in Ganpu Village to help understand the local market. Through interviews with local business owners and tourists, it was discovered that tourists tend to prefer free-range chicken, as well as local specialties such as wild fungi and herbs, to more common vegetables. Tourists also said that the acceptable price range for such products was up to double the normal price. The survey also showed that it is still necessary to explore distribution channels other than the local market.

Agro-forestry Techniques Handbook Completed

CI has completed a technical handbook showing how to build and manage an agro-forestry system, and a calendar and notebook detailing agriculture activities in Ganpu. These will be distributed to the villagers during livestock raising training in July. The handbook and notebook will give the villagers a better understanding of agro-forestry practices and show them how to deal with potential plant diseases and pests using eco-friendly methods.

Environmental Education at Ganpu Primary School

Following last year's nature education class in the forest, CI held a craft workshop on soil at Ganpu Primary School on April 12. The workshop introduced the rationales of soil composition and formation. Focusing on the local soil erosion problem, the project team also demonstrated to the students how soil could be conserved by the plants' root system. The workshop ended with students making their own 'eco-bottles' using waste plastic bottles. Situated in the dry valley area, Ganpu Village has long been confronting a soil erosion problem. Through this participatory learning process, local children gained a vivid understanding of how soil can help to conserve nature's beauty in their homeland.



Environmental education in Ganpu Primary School (© Wang Heng)

Communications

Photos and video were taken of the planting, monitoring, and environmental education to use as material for a project newsletter and video report.

Historic Tea–Horse Road

A historic trade route running through Li County is the Tea–Horse Road, a network of caravan paths winding through the mountains of southwest China since about a thousand years ago. This vast network of ancient routes for the trading of goods such as tea and salt extended as far as Tibet, Burma, and even the Indian subcontinent, and a section of it follows the Zagunao River through Li County and links the Tibetan Zoigê grasslands on a high plateau with Chengdu in the center of Sichuan Plain. Even today, part of the remaining ancient route can be seen on the cliffs alongside the river valleys. One of the major entry points to the Tea-Horse Road route is Taoping Village, which has been renovated and has become an important tourist attraction in Li County.

Plans for the Next Reporting Period

Construction of facilities for livestock-raising will be completed, training for livestock-raising and composting will be organized, and the handbook of agro-forestry techniques will be distributed. Monitoring will be carried out on the implementation of the conservation agreement and the management of the agro-forestry demonstration area. Water and soil loss will also be monitored. A study tour to the agro-forestry and vegetation rejuvenation sites will be organized. Communication materials for project updates and video records will be collected.

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