

GUYANA

National Forest Policy Statement



Guyana Forestry Commission

2011

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List of Acronyms

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| ABS | Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits arising from their Utilisation |
| CI | Conservation International |
| EPA | Environmental Protection Agency |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization |
| FPA | Forest Products Association |
| FPDMC | Forest Products Development and Marketing Council |
| FTCI | Forestry Training Centre Inc. |
| GFC | Guyana Forestry Commission |
| GGDMA | Guyana Gold and Diamond Miners' Association |
| GGMC | Guyana Geology and Mines Commission |
| GINRIS | Guyana Integrated Natural Resources Information System |
| GLAS | Guyana Legality Assurance System. |
| GLSC | Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission |
| GoG | Government of Guyana |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| IIC | Iwokrama International Centre for Rainforest Conservation and Development |
| IPCC | Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change |
| ITTO | International Tropical Timber Organization |
| LCDS | Low Carbon Development Strategy |
| MAC | Mangrove Action Committee |
| NMMAP | National Mangrove Management Action Plan |
| MOAA | Ministry of Amerindian Affairs |
| MoU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| MRVS | Monitoring, Reporting and Verification System |
| NBAP | National Biodiversity Action Plan |
| NBAP II | National Biodiversity Action Plan II |
| NLUC | National Land Use Committee |
| NREAC | Natural Resources and Environment Advisory Committee |
| NFPS | Guyana's National Forest Policy Statement |
| NGOs | Non-governmental organisations |
| OHS | Occupational Health and Safety |
| REDD+/REDD-plus | Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation |
| RGDP | REDD-plus Governance Development Plan |

| | |
|-----------|---|
| RIL | Reduced Impact Logging |
| S&RDD | Sea and River the Defence Department |
| SFPs | State Forest Permissions |
| SFM | Sustainable Forest Management |
| SLUC | Special Land Use Committee |
| TSAAs | Timber Sales Agreements |
| UNCBD/CBD | United National Convention on Biological Diversity |
| UNCCD | United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) |
| UNFCCC | United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change |
| WCL | Wood Cutting Leases |
| WWF | World Wildlife Fund |

INTRODUCTION

1. Overview of Guyana's Forest Sector

The Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) is entrusted with the mandate to ensure that Guyana's forest resources are sustainably managed and conserved. The Commission was established in 1979 having evolved out of the Forestry Department which was in existence since 1925. It has since evolved into a multifaceted organisation which develops and monitors standards for forest sector operations; advances sustainable forest management, forest protection and conservation strategies; oversees forest research, and provides support and guidance to forest education and training.

The enactment of the Forests Act in 1953 established it as the primary instrument which regulated the management of the nation's forest resources for over five decades. However, changes in Guyana's economic, social and administrative environment from the 1950s, particularly resulting from the achievement of independent status of Guyana in 1966 and international influences emanating from the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, have engendered greater appreciation of the expansive value of Guyana's forest resources. This has necessitated the revision of the goals, methods and instruments (legislation and guidelines) that are being used in the development of the forestry sector.

Guyana's National Forest Policy Statement (NFPS) was drafted in 1997 with an accompanying framework document, namely the Draft National Forest Plan in 2001. While the Statement outlined the national goals and ideals for the sustenance and use of the forest resources, the draft National Forest Plan provided the methods by which these broad objectives would be pursued and achieved.

More specifically, the NFPS of 1997 focussed on six (6) policy areas, namely Land Use, Forest Management, Forest Industry, Research and Information, Forest Training and Education, and Forest Administration and Governance. The Forest Management segment outlined policies for resource management; forest classification; conservation and use of forest resources; forest allocation, regulation and agreement; and forest charges. Policies for forest harvesting; industry viability; processing; marketing and promotion; and revenue generation were captured under the Forest Industry strategy.

The draft National Forest Plan as conceptualised in 2001 centred around ten (10) programme areas which provide the prescriptions for policy (NFPS) implementation and compliance with the regulations. It identifies responsibilities for implementation, describes mechanisms for monitoring and providing feedback to policy decision-makers and informs the overall planning process.

Subsequent to the formulation of the Forest Policy Statement in the late nineties, and boosted in part by the increased international attention and recognition of the important value of (tropical) forests to global health and existence as highlighted during the Rio Summit (1992), Guyana developed several other policies, guidelines and strategies to manage the nation's forested patrimony.

These developments have guided sustainable forest management and targeted improved processes and practices in the industry and include, *inter alia* the initiatives detailed in the following paragraphs.

The 1953 Forests Act was revised and tabled in Parliament in 2007, and after wide sectoral and national consultations, was unanimously approved in January 2009.

A Guyana Forestry Commission Bill set to revise the GFC Act of 1979 was presented to the National Assembly in 2006 and approved in 2007.

Guidelines for improved timber harvesting operations were collaboratively developed through a Code of Practice which is used as a standard for forest concession operations. This Code includes stipulations to ensure maintenance of good forest stands such as proximity limits and minimum diameter sizes for harvesting productive stems along with a wide variety of other prescriptions to ensure good forest practices.

Programmes were also designed and implemented in conjunction with the guidelines to broaden the range of species harvested for commercial purposes through the promotion of Lesser Utilized Wood Species, through research and dissemination of information on applications and availability, along with others to enhance the value of the end-products.

A National Log Export Policy was instituted in January 2009 to provide greater incentives for downstream processing of forest products and dissuade the export of primary products. This initiative was geared to enhance employment and development in the local processing sector and to add greater value to the products of specific species for export. The Policy is in scheduled for revision in 2011.

Forest dependent communities and other groups were engaged in programmes to generate employment and provide greater access to forest resources, especially in low-income rural areas. Through this Community Forestry initiative, Village Councils, communities or a group of individuals may apply for and be awarded forest concessions to operate on a commercial basis to improve their livelihood and contribute to community development. This is accomplished through the issuance of State Forest Permissions (SFPs) which is one of the three categories of State forest leases. Wood Cutting Leases (WCL) and Timber Sales Agreements (TSA) are the other two forms of tenureship which essentially apply to more large scale commercial operations.

Community development has been a key success area for the Forestry Commission's work over the past ten years with fifty four (54) community forestry associations currently working in close collaboration with the GFC. Collectively, these groups have been issued with eighty-one (81) State Forest Permissions (SFPs) and in some cases, these are additional to titled Amerindian lands already held.

Also, through the GFC's community forestry programme, the GFC provides support to small and mid-sized entities in areas of governance, financial management, organization support, sustainable forest management, academic vocational training and in resources and other capacity support. Additionally, the Forestry Training Centre Inc. has trained over 1,500 persons in the sector to date, and the number is continuously growing every year. This has greatly assisted in supporting the GFC's efforts in existing areas of training including in saw doctoring, timber grading, forest management and forest laws.

With a deforestation rate of less than one percent per annum, sustainable forest management (SFM) is a core operational part of the GFC's mandate and work. This is typified by the intensified level of forest monitoring and the expanded scope of these activities through increased numbers of forest stations (currently 28 in number), mobile

monitoring units and staff;

Significant advances have also been made in forest legality including the establishment of the Guyana Legality Assurance System (GLAS). The legitimacy of forest operations and products are verified through an enhanced log tracking system based on a tagging regime and bolstered by a paper trail which enables checks and verification at various points along the production chain.

The GFC and associated agencies, including the Forestry Training Centre Inc. (FTCI) and the Forest Products Development and Marketing Council (FPDMC) have worked in close collaboration with private sector bodies, donors and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to pursue and provide opportunities to forest based communities and forest enterprises on the whole, in key areas of sustainable forest management and wood processing. The GFC works closely with both small and large operators to build capacity to create meaningful opportunities for the sector. In executing this function, the GFC coordinates closely with the Forest Products Association and other Association bodies.

The scope of operations of the GFC have also widened to encompass management of the Mangrove Forest through the recent passage of Regulations in Parliament making them a protected species, and critical to the maintenance of Guyana's sea defences and the fishery industry.

Several other initiatives have been undertaken in collaboration with key donors including the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Conservation International (CI), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), among others. Some of the focal areas include enhancing capacity to move up the lumber value chain; kiln drying; encouraging new investments in processing; facilitating higher value wood production whilst improving efficiency and quality; building the necessary capacity to enable for development to take place; and creating market linkages to enhance export of high value processed products. Some of the main successes have been in the areas of enhanced understanding on key guidelines, increased income generation, improved forest resources management, access to more viable markets, and improved efficiency. However, more still needs to be done at both the small and large operator levels for greater achievements in the forest sector.

2. Guyana's Low Carbon Economic Pathway and Ecosystem Services

The goals and achievements detailed in the section above have gained greater importance through the Government of Guyana's (GoG) promulgation of its Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) which establishes how Guyana will maintain its forest cover in order to offer climate services to planet Earth. This Strategy is being used to garner payments from the international community in return for the ecosystem services the country provides, and will be applied to the Guyana's low carbon development and to ensure the conservation and sustainable utilisation of its forest resources.

The first agreement clinched via the nation's low carbon economy pathway was commissioned through the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the Government of Guyana and the Kingdom of Norway on November 9, 2009 for the "Cooperation on Issues related to the Fight against Climate Change, the Protection of

Biodiversity and the Enhancement of Sustainable Development”.

The MoU is being implemented based on three (3) main contextual approaches, namely, a) regular, systematic policy and political dialogue to facilitate a constructive exchange of views on global climate change and relevant environmental issues such as biodiversity; b) Collaboration, knowledge building, and sharing of lessons learned within the field of sustainable, low-carbon development, with REDD-plus¹ as the key component of this; and c) Collaboration on REDD-plus, including establishing a framework for financial support from Norway into a Guyana REDD-plus Investment Fund. Financial support will be linked to Guyana's success in limiting greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and establishing institutions and practices to strengthen Guyana's ability to reduce deforestation and forest degradation through the adoption and implementation of a REDD-plus Governance Development Plan (RGDP). One important aspect of the work on REDD+ is related to the development of a Monitoring, Reporting and Verification System (MRVS) that will provide a performance measurement framework for the REDD+ financing mechanism. This System is being developed and will be implemented by the GFC.

While there is recognition of the national and global responsibility for the sustainable management of Guyana's tropical rain forests and their vital role in maintaining the earth's climate and eco-systems, Guyana's forests remain an important source of income and enhancement for development of the nation and its people at all levels. As a consequence, careful, effective and efficient SFM practices are being applied for the optimum benefit of Guyana's forest potential. However, these goals are dependent on the availability of vital information and resources to planners and forestry practitioners who formulate and implement policies, methods and strategies for forest management.

Successful pursuit of these goals may be achieved through implementation of the policies and strategies envisioned and outlined in this revised NFPS, so that Guyana will:

- (a) continue steps to ensure that its forest resources deliver substantial benefits for national development for all members of society, while not compromising the livelihood of forest dwellers;
- (b) maintain an appropriate economic climate in which investors and operators can harvest and utilise forest resources and receive a fair return on their investment;
- (c) foster the growth of an efficient national forest industry, based on national and international investment, that operates in a manner consistent with sustainable development;
- (d) adhere to transparent systems of allocation and administration of all licences and other agreements, including revenue payments and collection;
- (e) continue implementing a system for submission and approving forest management plans which meet defined standards and criteria for sustainable management;

¹ REDD-plus (REDD+): Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation; and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries (UNFCCC Decision 2/CP.13)

- (f) establish codes of practice inclusive of guidelines and working standards which allow appropriate returns to operators, whilst maintaining the integrity and sustainability of the resource;
- (g) create and maintain inviolate reserves of representative samples of the various forest ecosystems which occur in the country, on a scale which is adequate to ensure their indefinite reproduction and continuation, having regard to their biodiversity;
- (h) maintain a level of control over all harvesting activities, sufficient to provide adequate protection of biodiversity and to ensure sustainable production;
- (i) create and maintain an efficient database, containing up-to-date information which is freely available to all, without compromising confidentiality, on national forest resources, their productivity, management potential, and their ecology and dynamics;
- (j) institute an effective system of information exchange and cross-sector discussion, which provides compatibility and consistency among relevant sectors of the economy;
- (k) support institutions to provide training and education in forestry and related disciplines for Guyanese nationals;
- (l) facilitate research to increase and refine the level of knowledge available on the forestry and forest industry sectors;
- (m) discharge its obligations under international treaties and agreements relevant to the forestry sector, and taken steps to ensure the continued discharge of such obligations;
- (n) maintain an environmental management system for the forestry sector which would address the environmental and social impacts of any activity within the forest and build strategies to minimise them;
- (o) ensure effective implementation of forest legality, monitoring procedures, and chain of custody protocols; and
- (p) take steps to promote sustainable management of mangrove forest.
- (q) Support work on REDD+ including the development of an monitoring, reporting and verification system (MRVS).

3. Summary of Major Achievements following the National Forest Policy Statement (NFPS), 1997

There has been significant progress in a number of areas outlined in the NFPS 1997. An overview of some of the achievements is presented below:

A comprehensive system for forest management through policies, legislation, institutions and the mechanisms for coordination in planning and management, was further advanced in the period following the NFPS 1997. Policy coordination is effected through the Cabinet Subcommittee on Natural Resources and the Environment, and the Natural Resources and Environment Advisory Committee (NREAC). There also exists a Land use Coordination Committee comprising of the Commissioners of Forests, Lands and Mining, and the

Executive Director of the Environment Protection Agency, chaired by the Prime Minister. This committee addresses conflict avoidance and conflict resolution among multiple land users and uses.

Under the framework of the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS), the harmonization process will continue. Many agencies have started to align their activities within the context of REDD+ and to effect improved collaboration not only at the inter-agency level, but also with forest users and their representative organisations. Recently a Special Land Use Committee has been established to resolve particular issues in mining and forestry, and a draft set of proposals have been prepared. Whilst the technical work of harmonization will be conducted by sector institutions, the Office of Climate Change (OCC) is facilitating this process.

Forest land allocation and sustainable forest management have been top priorities for Guyana and significant strides have been made in this regard over the past 10 years that have resulted in a transparent and equitable system of forest land allocation, and sustainable management of Guyana's forest resources. Procedures for allocating, revoking renewing and re-allocating, and forest concessions were developed, accompanied by an evaluation process. Through a set application procedure of application, forest areas in Guyana undergo a competitive, transparent and thorough process prior to forest lands being allocated to companies and/or individuals. Forest lands are issued in three main categories of leases based on the area size and contractual term limits: State Forest Permission (SFP) which are forest areas that are granted for a two year period on no more than 8,047 hectares; Wood Cutting Lease (WCL) which are granted for up to 10 years for 8,047 to 24,000 hectares; and Timber Sales Agreement (TSA) that are granted for up to 25 years for an area in excess of 24,000 hectares. Concessions have been granted for both forest goods and services, including timber, non-timber, and conservation purposes. Large concessions (TSAs and WCLs), are issued following an exploratory process. The purpose of the exploratory process is to determine the suitability of the applicant according to stringent technical and financial assessment criteria.

Progress was also seen in the development and implementation of sustainable forest management policies and strategies. Guyana's forest concessions are managed in a sustainable way in keeping with strict sustainable forest management guidelines and practices established and overseen by the GFC. At the legislative level, the Forest Act 2009 developed in the period post 1997, and unanimously passed by Parliament, outlines key areas governing the issuance of forest concessions, community forest management, and the requirements for sustainable forest management and legality assurance. At the sector level, there are several key guiding policies and procedures that have been developed during the period following 1997, including the Code of Practice for Timber Harvesting Operations; Forest Management and Annual Operational Plan Guidelines; Manuals of Procedures for Exploratory Permits, Field Procedures; additional Manuals for Forest Inventory, and Silviculture, along with other important resource documents. Additionally, work also commenced on the framework for the new forest charge system, and this is provided for in the Forest Act 2009.

Forest Inventory activities were carried out at the community level, and verification type activities at the forest concession level. At the large concession level, these inform the Forest Management and Annual Planning processes. From the operational side of forestry

management, the GFC instituted a system of licensing of chainsaw operators and many of these operators at the community level, have formed themselves into Community Forestry Associations.

In Forest Monitoring, the GFC has a wide network of monitoring stations that are staffed with the appropriate resources to conduct effective monitoring. Concession level activities are required to be in compliance with requirements of the GFC's Code of Practice for Timber Harvesting Operations which has been developed in keeping with international best practices. This Code outlines key requirements that include reduced impact logging techniques, protection of buffers, creeks and rivers; and stipulates the maximum allowable cut based on a precautionary principle. All requirements are geared towards allowing for harvested areas to naturally regenerate following completion of harvesting activities.

Additionally, routine environmental- and concession- level monitoring are coordinated by the GFC's head office and divisional stations. Monitoring reports inform remedial actions that may be required by companies in cases of non-compliance. A detailed system of control documentation is required to be complied with by all concessionaires including conformity with the national log tagging and tracking system which allows for verification of legality of origin of forest produce. At the completion of logging activities in large concessions in a given period, areas are closed off to allow for natural regeneration and post-harvest assessments are conducted.

In the case of small concessions, the management regime is also in keeping with key sustainable forest management principles. Concessionaires are required to manage their resource utilization based on a quota system that is also based on the maximum allowable cut in the Code of Practice for Harvesting Operations. In this category, given the small size of concessions, concessionaires are allowed to harvest in any part of the area; however, their activities are subject to the same form of control, log tracking, and environmental and concession level monitoring, as large concessions.

Over the years, the GFC has undertaken a phased approach to the implementation of guidelines/procedures, and the forest sector is considered to be at a point where these are fully implemented at most levels. Support activities including capacity building sessions continue to be done at the level of small operators, including community groups and Amerindian communities, as priority areas for the GFC.

Following 1997, progress was also made in the area of forest industry policy and strategies. Through the Guyana Office for Investment, investment agreement and accompanying incentives have been developed in a number of cases. The GFC and its sister agencies, including the Forest Products Development and Marketing Council (FPDMC) continued to support the information needs of the forest sector. Through the GFC, FPDMC and the Guyana Office for Investment, among other related agencies, support was provided to the forest sector in the area of forest industry development. The development of a Code of Practice for Processing Operations (Sawmills and Lumberyards) was also started in the period and is at the point of finalisation.

In the area of research and information, the GFC supported the work of its research partners, including those done in partnership with University of Guyana, the Tropenbos-Guyana Programme and the UK Department for International Development (DFID)/GFC institutional strengthening programmes.

Training, capacity building and market development have also been advanced through the Forestry Training Centre Inc. (FTCI) and the FPDMC. The Training Centre, which is an autonomous arm of the GFC, provides critical theoretical and practical exposure to stakeholders on reduced impact logging (RIL), road building, forest inventory and other key components of sustainable forest management. The FPDMC focuses on providing market advisories and industry development services for the forest sector and addresses among other areas, the provision of market intelligence, international reporting, and the facilitation of marketing linkages for the industry.

In overall forest administration and governance, the GFC has established working relationships through technical and ministerial sessions with the main private sector bodies and has also commenced the process of formation of a National Steering Committee of Community Forestry Organisations. The Board of the GFC continued to function in the area of providing strategic guidance and oversight of the work of the Commission.

4. The Constitution and Sustainable Development

Article 36 of the Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana 1980 states: “In the interests of the present and future generations, the State will protect and make rational use of its land, mineral and water resources, as well as its fauna and flora, and will take all appropriate measures to conserve and improve the environment.” The Constitution emphasises that this is one of the main principles of the country’s economic and social system. The Forest Policy which is enunciated in this document is consistent with this principle; and in extension, provides for increasing involvement of entrepreneurs, the private sector, local and indigenous peoples, non-governmental organisations, women and young people, in the performance of these functions, on terms and conditions satisfactory to them and beneficial to the country as a whole.

5. The Forest Resource

Guyana’s Forest

The total land area of Guyana is 21 million hectares, of which 18.3 million hectares are forested. Therefore, 87 % of the country’s land resource is covered by forests. Of the forested area, 12.8 million hectares is state forest administered by the Guyana Forestry Commission. These forests are classified as swamp forest on the coast and rain forest, seasonal and dry evergreen forest in the interior.

Although the total biodiversity in the Guyana Shield is not at the level as found in the forests of the Amazon basin, the forests of Guyana are valuable reservoirs of biodiversity. They provide home to approximately 8,000 plant species and in excess of 1,000 species of terrestrial vertebrates.² The fact that a high proportion of the forests of Guyana is pristine

² GFC 2011.

(the forests of the Guiana Shield have been recognised as one of the last remaining “frontier forests” of the world), they contain many animal and plant endemics (it is estimated that 5% of all flora species in Guyana are endemic), they provide numerous habitats for wildlife, and are an integral part of the country’s freshwater ecosystems further enhance the value of these forests.³ In addition, the forests provide other ecological services: the regulation of water regimes by intercepting rainfall and regulating its flow through the hydrological system; the maintenance of soil quality and the provision of organic materials through leaf and branch fall; the limiting of erosion and protection of soil from the direct impact of rainfall; and modulating climate.

In addition to the range of ecological services that the forests provide, the timber which the forests yield for housing and industry, and the non-timber forest products assist in the country’s social and economic growth and development. For instance, over the past 5 years, the annual average of the forestry sector’s primary⁴ contribution to Guyana’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has been 3.4 % with a total production of 2.2 million m³ earning foreign exchange in excess of 270 million US dollars. The average number of persons directly employed in the forest sector over the past 5 years is 20,000 persons. Forestry contributes to employment mainly in the rural and hinterland areas.⁵ The forest industries sub-sector consists of mainly logging and sawmilling operations with wide ranging characteristics. For example, the capital requirements of the sector range from very low to very high; its technological requirements range from very simple to very sophisticated; and forest industries may be either labour or capital intensive. The forests are also used for agriculture, research, ecotourism, Amerindian reservations, conservation and protected areas and biodiversity reserves.

Forests also provide socio-cultural services. They are an integral part of Amerindian culture, with communities using the forest resources as a source of food, building materials, fibers for textiles and weaving, medicine, tannins and dyes. In addition, several communities are involved in commercial harvesting and utilisation of forest resources.⁶

Role of Guyana’s Forest in Climate Change Mitigation

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) estimates that emissions from tropical deforestation in the 1990s were 20% of global carbon emissions. Thus, forests play a vital role in any initiatives to mitigate climate change. Guyana’s pristine rainforest covers over 80% of the total land area, and has had relatively low historical rates of deforestation (0.1 % to 0.3%). Based on recent studies, deforestation and degradation occur in the forest where logging, mining and agricultural activity co-exist, as well as in the forests on Amerindian and other private lands. Deforestation and forest degradation are driven by five principal factors, namely: (i) the clearing of forested areas for mining; (ii)

³ Environmental Protection Agency. 2007. *National Biodiversity Action Plan II (2007-2011)*.

⁴ Forestry’s contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is traditionally measured from output of Logs, Roundwood and Sawnwood.

⁵ GFC 2011.

⁶ GFC 2011.

the clearing of areas for forestry activities ; (iii) the conversion of forested areas to allow for agricultural activities; (iv) infrastructure development such as roads; and (v) fires.⁷ Natural factors that contribute to deforestation and forest degradation include flooding, drought, tropical storms and forest fires.

In an effort to address the development challenges of Guyana and simultaneously continue on this low path of deforestation and forest degradation which would contribute to combating global climate change, Guyana crafted its Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS). The LCDS sets out the national conditions under which Guyana would (i) put its rainforest under long term protection once the right economic incentives are created; and (ii) use the payments received for forests' climate services to re-orient the country's economy onto a low carbon, environmentally sound trajectory. The overall goal of the Strategy is provide "the world a working example of how immediate action can stimulate the creation of a low deforestation, low carbon, climate resilient economy."⁸

It identifies five strategic imperatives for Guyana to undertake in order to generate economic growth at or in excess of projected Latin American growth rates over the coming decade, while simultaneously eliminating approximately 30 percent of non-forestry emissions through the use of clean energy, namely:

- Investing in strategic low carbon economic infrastructure, improved access to arable, non-forested land; and improved fibre optic bandwidth to facilitate the development of low-carbon business activities.
- Nurturing investment in high-potential low-carbon sectors.
- Reformation of existing forest-dependent sectors, including forestry and mining.
- Expanding access to services, and creating new economic opportunities for Amerindian communities.
- Improving services to the broader Guyana citizenry, including improving and expanding job prospects, promoting private sector entrepreneurship, and improving social services with a particular focus on health and education.

The implementation of a REDD+ strategy is viewed as an avenue through which resources could be attracted for the development of the country while protecting and maintaining the forests in an effort to reduce global carbon emission. The LCDS and REDD+ are integrally linked with the former being the strategic framework and the latter the operational mechanism that will enable the model to be executed and monitored. REDD+ therefore forms one part of the LCDS.

⁷ Government of Guyana. 2010. *Guyana Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP): World Bank Forest Carbon Partnership Facility*. Guyana: Guyana Forestry Commission.

⁸ Government of Guyana. 2010. *A Low Carbon Development Strategy: Transforming Guyana's Economy While Combating Climate Change*, 3rd draft. Guyana: Office of the President.

6. Constraints to the Development of the Forest Sector

The main constraints facing the forest sector post 1997, following the implementation of the National Forest Policy Statement, can be classified in four main areas: unavailability of skilled personnel, insufficient added value forest activities, financing, and limited research capability.

There has been a continued constraint in the availability of skilled and trained personnel for recruitment at both the governmental and private sector arms of the forest sector. Retaining trained personnel has also posed a challenge as this has hindered the more rapid and progressive growth in private sector and government initiatives.

The diversification of the forestry sector into added value forest activities has also not been to the extent desired to further advance development of the industry as a whole. There also continues to be low level of efficiency in the conversion process and retooling of wood processing facilities remains a priority under this revised NFPS.

Access to financing continues to be a challenge that is faced by the private sector and one that hinders the full potential of the forest sector from being realised. In many ways, this has also impacted on the movement along the value chain. Some investors have diversified with initial support of financing, but this has not been continuous, and has led to protracted growth.

The level of research capacity in Guyana is limited and this has impacted on the continued progress started under other programmes present in Guyana in the late 1990 and early 2000 years. The main research and training institutions experience challenges in expanding and advancing full programmes owing to resource constraints to cover research cost and administrative expenses.

The forest policies and strategies presented in this revised NFPS are intended to address these constraints which hinder greater advances in the forestry sector with the ultimate goal of achieving significant contribution to Guyana's economic development.

PART I

OBJECTIVES

1. Overall Objective

The *overall* objective of the National Forest Policy is the conservation, protection, management and utilisation of the nation's forest resources, while ensuring that the productive capacity of the forests for both goods and services is maintained or enhanced.

2. Specific Objectives

The *specific* objectives are to

- (a) promote the sustainable and efficient forest activities which utilise the broad range of forest resources and contribute to national development while allowing fair returns to local and foreign entrepreneurs and investors;
- (b) achieve improved sustainable forest resource yields while ensuring the conservation of ecosystems, biodiversity, and the environment;
- (c) ensure watershed protection and rehabilitation: prevent and arrest the erosion of soils and the degradation of forests, grazing lands, soil and water; promote natural regeneration, afforestation and reforestation ; and protect the forest against fire, pests and other hazards; and
- (d) identify and quantify environmental services to generate forest incentives for national development.

PART II

A. LAND USE POLICIES

1. Integrated Land Use Planning as a Basis for Forest Policy

At the level of policy, planning and management, several agencies in Guyana have been mandated to play a role in land use planning, natural resources management and implementation. These include the Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC), Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission (GLSC), Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC), Ministry of Amerindian Affairs (MOAA), the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Local Government, and the Guyana Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), among others. While the Commissioner of Lands and Surveys is the custodian of all public lands, the GFC, GGMC and GLSC administer State land that is utilised for forestry, mining, agriculture, recreational, religious, residential, grazing, industrial, commercial, business, tourism and other uses. Each of these three Government agencies may issue licenses and permits for different purposes for the same plot of land. In recognition of the complexity of the land use issues the government established the National Land Use Committee (NLUC) and the Natural Resources and Environment Advisory Committee (NREAC)⁹. These Committees function in concert with the Cabinet Sub Committee on Natural Resources to harmonise tenure to a particular area with multiple potential uses.

A National Land Use Policy is still to be finalized. The implementation of a comprehensive land use policy and an associated adequate land development plan will facilitate a more structured approach to the diverse land uses in and around Guyana, thus promoting optimum land use and integration among the different uses.

The Government of Guyana recognises that coordinated/collaborative land use planning is of vital importance to the effective management of Guyana's vast natural resources. As a result, there is a GLSC's Development of Land Use Project which will provide support to draft a National Land Use Policy and Plan for Guyana. To date, the GLSC has completed regional land use plans for Region 6 - East Berbice, Corentyne; Region 9 - Sub-region 1; Lethem-Linden Road Corridor; Soesdyke-Linden Highway; and Natural Resources Management Project Regional Planning area.

The GLSC houses an interagency database referred to as Guyana Integrated Natural Resources Information System (GINRIS), which was established to develop the GIS capacity in Guyana and to serve as a repository for national GIS information. This database comprises spatial data on the major land uses in Guyana.

Another positive step to improving land use coordination is the promotion of integrated watershed management and overall protection of water resources through the establishment of a National Water Council in Guyana in 2008. One of the key functions of the council is develop and/or review the national water policy and to oversee its management and coordination.

⁹ The NREAC is a technical committee comprising directors of natural resource institutions (such as, forestry, mining, water, agriculture, land use, energy) and the Guyana Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This committee examines environmental and resource policies and makes recommendations for consideration by the Guyana Government.

Also, a Special Land Use Committee (SLUC) was established, with the principal term of reference being to make appropriate, realistic and practical recommendations to the Government of Guyana on optimising the mineral and forest reserve utilisation.

2. Land Use Planning

The Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission (GLSC) functions under the GLSC Act, 1999, to implement *inter alia*, the preparation of land use plans. The function is “*to prepare land use plans for Guyana or any part of Guyana, except any municipality which is subject to a planning scheme (or interim development control pending the preparation of a planning scheme) under the Town and Country Planning Act*”. The GFC supports the GLSC in this role since land use plans and policies play a key role in the implementation of forest policy in accordance with the following guidelines:

- (a) The nation’s forest policy shall be an integral part of a comprehensive National Land Use Plan. This Plan shall be based on land use policies that recognise the sometimes conflicting but legitimate interests of different stakeholders, and shall promote a process of developing a consensus on land use.
- (b) Priority shall be given to the preparation of a National Land Use plan which provides:
 - (i) guidelines for environmental protection and sustainable resource utilisation;
 - (ii) a legal framework for resource management;
 - (iii) national programmes for resource management; and
 - (iv) an institutional framework for land use implementation.
- (c) National Committees, regional authorities and local communities shall be involved in the formulation and approval of land use plans.
- (d) The Commission shall give consideration to the recommendations and principles emerging from the discussions of the SLUC.
- (e) The Commission shall contribute to the work of the National Water Council and the formulation of the National Water Policy.

B. LAND USE STRATEGIES

1. Implementation of Land Use Plans

- (a) Sectoral legislation shall be reviewed and reformed to remove overlaps in responsibilities for land allocation. Such reforms shall ensure that the Forests Act and Regulations are consistent and in harmony with other relevant legislation.

- (b) A centralised data-base shall be developed to ensure that data are readily available. This shall record and store all the available information on natural resources, transactions, permits, and applications for land in all sectors.
- (c) Formalised systems for the exchange of information within and among sectors shall be established.
- (d) Land use plans at national, regional and local levels, based on biophysical, social and economic information shall be prepared.
- (e) Mechanisms shall be established to disseminate land use information to assist informed participation in land use planning by local communities.
- (f) Amerindian Councils and private owners with more than 100 hectares of forested land shall be encouraged to develop and implement sustainable management plans for forests on their lands.
- (g) Pending the finalisation of a National Land Use Plan, the Land Use Committee, would serve as a forum for resolving land use conflicts at the institutional level.
- (h) The Land Use Committee shall establish a mechanism to co-ordinate the use of watercourses for multiple purposes, especially navigation, fishing, and the provision of drinking water.
- (i) Mining methods which damage the forest environment or which destroy water quality, aquatic life and ecotourism potential, and adversely affect the use of water courses, shall be discouraged and their negative impacts minimised.
- (j) The GFC shall give consideration to the recommendations and principles emerging from the discussions of the SLUC by giving:
 - (i) Consideration of the relevant and Government of Guyana (GoG) approved sections of the protocol.
 - (ii) Execution of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the GGMC and the GFC to solidify the administration of the notice procedures. An MOU or agreement for execution between the Guyana Gold and Diamond Miners' Association (GGDMA) and the Forest Products Association (FPA) shall be encouraged to ensure that the agreed recommendations of the SLUC are honoured.

PART III

A. FOREST MANAGEMENT POLICIES

1. Resource Ownership

- (a) The ownership of all forest resources, except those on private property and on Amerindian lands, shall be vested in the State.
- (b) All forests, including those now on State Lands, but with the exception of forests privately or legally held, shall be designated State Forests.

2. Forest Classification

State Forests shall be classified as follows:

- (a) **Multiple Use Forests** - forests to be utilised for the concurrent production of goods (timber and non-timber products), and the provision of, services such as those derived from the ecosystem and other natural resources
- (b) **Permanent protection forests and biodiversity reserves** - in which, because of the type of the forest ecosystem, no tree felling or other types of forest utilisation shall be permitted, and in which representative areas of biodiversity shall be inviolate.
- (c) **Reserve forests** - forests which are yet to be classified, and on which no extraction shall be permitted without Ministerial approval.
- (g) **Conversion forests** - forests to be cleared for other uses

3. Conservation and Use of Forest Resources

- (a) All the resources of the forests shall be managed in a sustainable manner for the optimisation of their social, economic and environmental benefits to all stakeholders.
- (b) Forest management practices shall make all efforts to conserve biological diversity and its associated values, water resources, soils, and unique and fragile ecosystems, and by so doing, maintain the ecological functions and integrity of the forests as far as possible.
- (c) The intellectual property rights of Guyana, particularly as they relate to the research and utilisation of Guyana's biodiversity, and the conditions under which foreign investors or their research teams and other agents operate, shall be clearly spelt out. Foreign (non-Guyanese) and local (Guyanese) commercial entrepreneurs and researchers, shall apply for, obtain and comply with the requirements of the Biodiversity Research Permits issued by the Environmental Protection Agency.

4. Forest Allocation Regulation and Agreement

- (a) Commercial extraction of the State Forests shall be undertaken only under

concession agreements.

- (b) Concession licences and permits shall be allocated through a transparent process developed by the Commission.
- (c) The process for the issuance of State Forest Exploratory Permits, which is open to all prospective investors and which does not conflict with other allocation mechanisms, shall be implemented.
- (d) Concessions can only be transferable as stipulated in the Forest Act 2009.
- (e) Concessions shall be also granted for forest uses other than timber extraction.
- (f) The Guyana Forestry Commission, through the approval and monitoring of the implementation of management and operational plans, and the development and monitoring of Codes of Practice, shall be responsible for the regulation of operations in concessions, unallocated State Forests and all other categories of the forest estate.
- (g) A legislative framework shall be developed and applied for conflict avoidance and/or resolution, in relation to the multiple uses of State Forest Resources. The Guyana Forestry Commission shall address all issues of conflict under its mandate.
- (h) In the absence of conclusive research data, the regenerative capacities of identified forest types and species shall be conservatively estimated, taking into account all relevant environmental factors.

5. Forest Charges

- (a) A formula shall be devised for charging area fees which ensure fair returns to both the investor and the State.
- (b) In addition to stumpage fees, an area fee shall be charged.
- (c) Revenues derived from area fees shall be paid into the Consolidated Fund through the Guyana Forestry Commission.
- (d) Fees shall be charged for State Forest Exploratory Permits. Such fees shall be revised periodically by the Guyana Forestry Commission.
- (e) Fees shall be charged for the grant or renewal of any State forest authorisation, permit, licence, or certificate under this Act.
- (f) The holder of any exploratory permit, concession, or use permit shall be charged an annual management fee.

B. FOREST MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

1. Resource Inventory

- (a) The designation of State Forests shall be based on periodic comprehensive reviews of the land use policy taking into account all the uses and services provided by the forest resources.

- (b) Reconnaissance inventories of State Forests shall be undertaken by the Guyana Forestry Commission. These shall be utilised to provide information:
 - (i) on the value of the nation's forest resources in general, including NTFPs and
 - (ii) for the specific purposes of allocating concessions, and for forest management planning..
- (c) Inventories shall be conducted by concessionaires for the purpose of formulating and implementing Annual Operational and Forest Management Plans. These shall be checked and approved by the Guyana Forestry Commission.
- (d) Topographic and other relevant surveys shall be conducted, as a matter of priority, in order to identify and demarcate vulnerable ecosystems.
- (e) The ecological, social and economic impact of utilising timber and non-timber forest resources shall be assessed and monitored by the Guyana Forestry Commission in conjunction with the Environmental Protection Agency. Such impact from extractive activities shall be regulated as appropriate.

2. Conservation and Use of Forest Resources

Since the enactment of its first Forest Act in 1953, Guyana has taken bold steps in the conservation of its forests. Areas such as the Moraballi Forest Reserve have been excised from the forest estate are to be protected in perpetuity through the careful monitoring and management, and with the enablement of special legislation. The Moraballi Forest Reserve is a major seed bank for Guyana's most valuable timber species, Greenheart (*Chlorocardium rodiei*), and covers some 11,000 hectares of forest.

In the area of conservation of forest biodiversity, in 1989 Guyana collaborated with the Commonwealth Secretariat to establish the Iwokrama International Centre for Rainforest Conservation and Development (IIC) which was later enshrined under the Iwokrama International Centre for Rain Forest Conservation and Development Act 1996. The Reserve is located in Central Guyana and is a 371,000 hectare forest that is being utilised as a living laboratory for sustainable forest management, eco-tourism and scientific research.

On wider, more global scale, Guyana has gained significant recognition for its role in sustainable forest management and conservation as detailed in the following sections.

Several other areas have been identified and are being managed for biodiversity conservation and protection. These include the Mabura Hill Forest Reserve and the Kanuku Mountains.

The GFC has included another category for forest allocation through the issuance of Conservation Concessions – the first one being to Conservation International (Guyana) in Southern Guyana. Conservation concessions are managed for research and protection of forest biodiversity, whereby the concession holder does not engage in any commercial activity such as logging, but is required to pay royalties to the GFC in the same fashion as commercial-type operations.

Generally however, the use of forest resources in Guyana is guided by the following principles:

- (a) Forest harvesting and related infrastructural development in the Multiple Use Forest shall be coordinated and regulated in accordance with prescribed Forest Management Plans, to maintain levels of log extraction that are consistent with the need to safeguard environmental quality and ecological balance, where environmental authorisation is required.
- (b) The utilisation of Multiple Use Forest shall be based on the inherent capability of the forests, and their sustainable use. Further, each large-scale concessionaire shall be required to set aside 4.5% of their concession as a biodiversity reserve which typifies the representative ecosystems/forest types of the entire allocated area.
- (c) The Multiple Use Forests shall be managed to ensure an adequate supply of raw material for the forest based industries and their development in perpetuity.
- (d) The licensing system for chainsaw operators shall be maintained and upgraded as necessary and shall ensure that those transforming the wood resource to lumber be registered and licensed before operating chainsaws in authorised areas of the State Forests.
- (e) Operators of chainsaws and portable mills shall be trained in skills that contribute to the achievement of operational efficiency and reduce ecological damage during felling, harvesting and lumbering.
- (f) Relevant ecological principles shall be applied in the demarcation of different Forest Classes, e.g., the conservation status of species and their habitats; the area required to sustain a given system; and the scale and intensity of forest management.
- (g) Management or Operational Plans shall be required for the harvesting of non-timber resources of the forest, before a licence or permit is issued.
- (h) The Code of Practice for Timber Harvesting and other Codes being developed such as the Code of Practice for Non-Timber Forest Product extraction, will guide forest management and shall be applied and adhered to by all forest users. The Codes shall be available to the public.

3. Resource Allocation Regulation Agreement

- (a) The Guyana Forestry Commission shall continually implement a fair and transparent framework for the allocation, revocation, renewal and re-negotiation of forest concessions.
- (b) The Guyana Forestry Commission shall identify blocks of forests eligible for concessions. These shall include blocks of varied sizes to provide opportunities for investors of different scales and resources.
- (c) The Guyana Forestry Commission shall develop and maintain a standard agreement so that all concessionaires shall operate under the same conditions in regard to fiscal

provisions and general forest management requirements.

- (d) Timber Sales Agreements and Wood Cutting Leases shall be audited annually by the Guyana Forestry Commission in order to ascertain whether the concessionaire is meeting the standards and conditionalities defined in sustainable management plans; following established guidelines; and maintaining production.

State Forest Permits shall be audited annually on some parameters such as compliance with quotas, for general performance and adherence to concession and other agreements. The results of the audit shall inform the process of renewal for concessions.

- (e) Mechanisms shall be established to review fines, penalties and compensation payable every five years in relation to market prices for forest produce. Adjustments shall be made where warranted.

4. Forest Charges

- (a) The Guyana Forestry Commission shall formulate and revise on a periodic basis, an economic rationale for forest revenue systems.
- (b) The GFC shall implement the forest charges system as laid out in the Forest Act 2009
- (c) Systems shall be devised for charging for the harvesting of specified NTFP.

PART IV

A. FOREST INDUSTRY POLICIES

1. Forest Harvesting

The establishment of primary access roads by concessionaires in Multiple Use Forests shall be coordinated and regulated in accordance with national development strategies, to improve the road infrastructure of Guyana's hinterland.

2. Industry Viability

- (a) The fundamental objective shall be to promote a financially and economically viable forest industry with focus on the balance of social, economic and environmental development in the sustainable management of Guyana's forest resources
- (b) The number and types of forest-based industries established shall be consistent with the capacity of the nation's forests extraction potential under SFM.
- (c) The principles of production efficiency and productivity, enhancing recovery rates through improved processing techniques, promoting down-stream industry development and increasing the production line of value-added products shall be developed and applied as a priority.

3. Forest Industry Investment

- (a) Priority areas for foreign investment shall be the more capital intensive, higher technology projects, which improve efficiency. Entities linked to overseas marketing networks shall also receive special attention.
- (b) All foreign investors shall recruit and train Guyanese citizens so that national expertise may be developed and employment opportunities maximised at all levels.
- (c) Investments in added-value forest product development and promotion shall be encouraged.

4. Processing

- (a) Efforts shall be made to encourage greater utilisation of logs in downstream activity.
- (b) The commercial production and processing of non-timber forest resources, such as fibres, latex, oils and fruits, shall be promoted as essential elements of sustainable forest utilisation.
- (c) Periodic review of the National Log Export Policy will be done to inform the follow-on steps for supporting forest industry development.

5. Marketing and Promotion

- (b) A financially viable local market shall be developed for Guyana's timber and timber products, with emphasis being placed on the promotion and utilisation of the lesser-used species.
- (c) Product development and enhancement of market intelligence for stakeholders and investors shall be pursued and maintained.

6. Revenue Generation

- (a) A licence shall be required for each conversion process of logs into timber products.
- (b) There shall be regular revisions of fees, taxes and charges in order to reflect changes in production cost and the selling prices of the country's forest products.
- (a) Measures shall be taken to maximise in-country returns on exports.

B. FOREST INDUSTRY STRATEGIES

1. Forest Harvesting

Special fiscal rewards shall be provided to concessionaires who establish and maintain primary access roads which meet appropriate forest engineering standards, which can form part of a national road development programme.

2. Industry Viability

- (a) The size, scope and scale of the forest industry sub-sector shall be related to the availability of timber and non-timber forest resources from sustainably managed forests, supplemented by those from such other areas as may be designated by the Guyana Forestry Commission.
- (b) New technologies for the economic utilisation of timber to broaden and diversify the range of species available, to minimise waste, and to maximise the returns from the conversion of felled trees, shall be encouraged and utilised so long as the sustainability and integrity of the forests are not compromised.

3. Forest Industry Investment

- (a) The Guyana Forestry Commission shall maintain a unit focussed on policy and planning issues. The unit shall, *inter alia*, collect and disseminate information on key forest sector data to both established and potential investors, and shall collaborate with the Ministry of Trade, Guyana Bureau of Statistics, Bank of Guyana, and other relevant agencies.
- (b) All investors in the forest industry sub-sector shall be required to submit Forest

Industry Development Plans in order to obtain operating licences from the appropriate authority.

4. Processing

- (a) All commercial processing activities including those of non-timber resources shall be licensed by the appropriate regulatory institutions.
- (b) All processing operations shall be classified by their installed capacity.
- (c) The Guyana Forestry Commission shall develop criteria and regulations for the use of all processing operations (including portable, static/ band mills).
- (d) Processing centres shall be located in areas approved by the Guyana Forestry Commission and other relevant agencies. The criteria for their establishment and location shall be developed by the Guyana Forestry Commission and other relevant agencies.
- (e) Incentives shall be considered and provided where appropriate to encourage secondary and tertiary processing at these centres.
- (f) Existing Timber Grading Rules shall be revised, updated and expanded to incorporate other forest products.

5. Marketing and Promotion

- (a) Promotional schemes to educate international buyers and end-users about the specific qualities of Guyana's woods shall be sustained.
- (b) The market advantages of Guyana's forest products shall be identified, promoted and optimized.
- (c) An international marketing strategy for Guyana's forest products shall be formulated and shall include the creation and promotion of niche markets for targeted species.
- (d) Seminars and training programmes for product development shall be conducted by the Guyana Forestry Commission, the Forest Products Development and Marketing Council, the Forest Products Association and other relevant stakeholders.
- (e) The marketing of lesser-used species shall be optimised through research and development to identify appropriate processing technologies at various stages of the supply chain: log conversion; storage; machine and tool setting; and post-conversion treatment such as preservation and drying to suit market needs.
- (f) The Forest Products Association and the Forest Products Development and Marketing Council shall support the export trade and, in particular, perform the following functions:
 - (i) provide technical and promotional material;
 - (ii) undertake market intelligence and explore market diversification;
 - (iii) seek markets;

- (iv) advise producers on prices and markets; and
- (v) recommend measures to gain entry to selected markets.
- (g) Appropriate measures shall be taken to:
 - (i) promote the marketing of Guyana's non-timber forest products;
 - (ii) encourage direct sales between suppliers and end users;
 - (iii) pursue more competitive freight rates;
 - (iv) establish and enforce grading rules for all forest products in accordance with local and international standards; and
 - (v) to promote the optimisation of returns on all forest products sold.
- (h) Marketing and product development research (including the use of by-products) shall be undertaken to support the Marketing Council.

6. Revenue Generation

- (a) A comprehensive study of all taxes, fees, rates and other charges pertaining to the forest industry sub-sector along with current incentives shall be undertaken periodically for the purpose of revising present revenue generating mechanisms.
- (b) Fiscal instruments and incentives shall be continually assessed or developed to induce and encourage high quality wood production and higher levels of wood recovery.

PART V

A. RESEARCH AND INFORMATION POLICIES

In accordance with the Guyana Forestry Commission Act (2007), the Commission is required “to research, collate, analyse, prepare, and disseminate data, statistics, and other information about forests and all aspects of forestry, including forest ecology and the use of forest produce.”

The Commission will do so in collaboration with other partners including, but not limited to the University of Guyana, Iwokrama International Centre for Rain Forest Conservation and Development, Conservation International World Wildlife Fund (WWF), International Timber and Trade Organisation (ITTO) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). The Commission will coordinate such research activities. In particular:

1. The Commission shall promote appropriate research into all aspects of forestry and forest-related activities and on their physical, biological, ecological, economic, social, cultural and other impacts.
2. The Commission shall promote appropriate research that targets the requirements/needs of the LCDS and REDD+.
3. The State shall ensure the provision and development of material and human resources necessary to sustain research at a level commensurate with the potential value of the resource.
4. The Guyana Forestry Commission shall disseminate knowledge and information on all aspects of forestry to enhance understanding and appreciation of the value of Guyana’s forests.
5. Appropriate technology for utilising forest biomass in energy production shall be researched and developed. The Guyana Forestry Commission shall collaborate with other relevant agencies, such as the Guyana Energy Authority and the Institute of Applied Science and Technology, to achieve this.

B. RESEARCH AND INFORMATION STRATEGIES

1. The Guyana Forestry Commission, working with relevant partners will:
 - a) plan and coordinate national forestry research;
 - b) determine priorities for research and development;
 - c) advise on the most suitable ways for conducting forestry research;
 - d) foster close collaboration with organisations responsible for research in other aspects of land use; and
2. The local industrial sector shall be encouraged to support forestry research.

3. Listed below, are priority research actions which the GFC can coordinate implementation of:
 - a. Research into the development of non-timber forest products, with emphasis on the sustainability of the resource.
 - b. Research on integrated multiple land use.
 - c. The economic values of market and non-market goods and services of forest lands.
 - d. Silviculture and other enhancement techniques.
 - e. Research on the growth and regeneration of a number of forest species in a range of ecosystems.
 - f. Experiments that are designed to assess rates of erosion, run-off, water-loss and felling damage under various logging regimes.
 - g. Research on the establishment of forest plantations, and to the relevance of agro-forestry systems, in order to reduce the pressure on the country's natural forest resources.
4. Whenever appropriate, research centred on natural resources shall be undertaken in collaboration with local and overseas agencies. Guyanese shall, in every case, be assigned a responsible role within an integrated national forestry research programme.
5. Mechanisms shall be established to strengthen links among international and national NGOs and organisations, academic institutions, private sector bodies and general stakeholders, also GoG institutions.
6. The Guyana Forestry Commission library and herbarium shall be continuously upgraded and developed to provide an information service accessible both to the sector and to the general public.
7. Information and publicity programmes shall continue to be mounted, using appropriate media, to inform the public on forestry issues.
8. Information programmes shall be held internally to ensure that GFC field staff are routinely briefed on major developments involving interventions in the forestry sector.
9. A database shall be created and maintained, containing comprehensive and up-to-date information on national forest resources, including market intelligence, as well as results of relevant local and international research.
10. Information exchange among sectoral agencies shall be promoted in order to assist in harmonising policies and strategies in the different sectors.
11. The State shall ensure the formulation and implementation of a national system to assess forest carbon stock and forest area change.

PART VI

A. FORESTRY TRAINING AND EDUCATION POLICIES

1. Training and education in forestry and forestry-related disciplines shall continue to be provided at all levels and for all types of forestry activities.
2. All programmes for forestry education and training shall be co-ordinated by the Guyana Forestry Commission, and shall form part of a coherent policy and integrated strategy.
3. Facilities for the development of the skills and experience of personnel currently working in the sector shall continue to be provided.
5. Public education and awareness of forestry issues shall be promoted, and an appreciation for the sustainable management of forestry resources of Guyana and the role of Guyana's forest in the mitigating the effects of climate change encouraged.
6. All foreign programmes and projects operating in Guyana's forests shall continue to include components for the training of local personnel and for capacity building and be in consonance with National Forest Policy.
7. The principles of equal opportunity and affirmative action shall continue to be applied in respect of the education and training of women and indigenous people.
8. Training in ancillary areas should be provided to staff of the Commission.
9. Training should be provided to staff of the GFC in a national system to monitor emissions and emission reductions which would support the LCDS and REDD+.

B. FORESTRY TRAINING AND EDUCATION STRATEGIES

1. Complementarities of efforts in education, training and local institution-building shall be promoted between Guyanese agencies and institutions and all approved 'forest-based' programmes operating in Guyana.
2. The University of Guyana's Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry shall have an Advisory Board, which shall include representatives of the Guyana Forestry Commission, research institutions and local industry.
3. Collaborative efforts in forestry education and training shall be continued between the Forestry Commission and educational institutions. In particular, the Forestry Certificate Course at the Guyana School of Agriculture and the Diploma in Forestry and Degree in Forestry at the University of Guyana shall be developed, strengthened and supported, so that they would continue to meet the needs of the Guyana Forestry Commission, the forest industry sub-sector, and other organisations.
4. Relationships shall be established with all international and overseas based programmes to allow those programmes and their staff to be utilised in the post-graduate training of students of the University of Guyana.

5. In-service training, short courses at all levels, shall be given major emphasis.
6. The Guyana Forestry Commission, through the Forestry Training Centre Inc. (FTCI), shall continue to provide regular training sessions in key forestry areas, including Reduced Impact Logging (RIL), as well as other aspects of sustainable forest management, forest industry development and management of natural resources for stakeholders, including small/community, indigenous and large scale operators. This service will continue to be available to the region as well.
7. Included in training programmes in ancillary areas shall be:
 - a. training for persons employed as chainsaw operators and tree spotters;
 - b. training and licensing of operators of heavy duty equipment for the specific category of equipment for which they are employed;
 - c. training for sawmill employees, such as those operating the planer/moulders, main head rigs, saw maintenance;
 - d. training in occupational health and safety (OHS) for the forest sector, including employees of the Commission, forest operatives, sawmill workers and lumber yard workers; and
 - e. training in basic mining practices, ecotourism, conservation of biodiversity to improve their ability to report events in the field and also foster better relations with the mining sector and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA);
8. The staff of the GFC and other relevant agencies shall receive training related to REDD+ and relevant LCDS areas.

PART VII

A. FOREST ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE POLICIES

All administrative arrangements for the development of the forestry sector in Guyana shall be aimed at servicing and supporting the sustainable management of the country's forest resources and forest industries.

The forestry sector shall be governed in accordance with the national objective of promoting sustainable development and especially the principle of sustainable utilisation of our natural resources. Towards this objective, the Guyana Forestry Commission will be guided by the principles set by the National Forest Policy and relevant legislation.

The Guyana Forestry Commission shall also work closely with relevant Government agencies and shall participate in National Committees.

Additionally, the Guyana Forestry Commission shall work in concert with all international conventions and agreements to which the Government of Guyana is signatory, and primarily in accordance with the guidelines of the Low Carbon Development Strategy and the REDD+ Strategy.

B. FOREST ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE STRATEGIES

1. Roles and Responsibilities

(a) The GFC shall carry out its functions in accordance with the GFC Act and Forest Act. The Revised GFC Act 2007 (Part 2 Section 7) states:

The Commission comprises the following members -

- (i) not less than nine and not more than thirteen members, including a chairman, appointed in writing by the Minister; and the Commissioner as an *ex officio* member of the Commission.
 - (ii) The Guyana Forestry Commission shall be served by a staff comprising forestry professionals, technicians and other categories of support staff.
 - (iii) The Minister with responsibility for the Forestry Sector shall appoint sub-committees comprised of relevant stakeholders such as members of the Forest Products Association and the Guyana Manufacturers' and Services Association to address issues related to the sector and its development
- (b) The Head of the Staff of the Guyana Forestry Commission shall be a qualified professional who shall be designated Commissioner of Forests. The Commissioner of Forests shall be the Chief Executive Officer of the Forestry Commission.
- (c) Revised legislation and administrative arrangements shall clearly delineate and

describe the functions of:

- the Ministry with responsibility for the forestry sector, and natural resources in general;
 - the Guyana Forestry Commission; and
 - the staff of the Guyana Forestry Commission.
- (d) The duration of appointments of Commissioners shall be staggered to allow for continuity of policies and the number of Commissioners shall be enough to facilitate the same.
- (e) The responsibilities of the various government agencies which operate in the natural resources sector of the country shall be reviewed and harmonised.
- (f) The GFC shall also implement the relevant sections of the REDD+ Governance Development Plan including areas of strengthened forest monitoring, forest resource allocation and capacity building.

2. Private Sector

To supplement its own human resources, the Guyana Forestry Commission shall, from time to time and through contractual and other arrangements, enlist the expertise of private persons, agencies and Non-Governmental Organisations, for the performance of some of its operational functions, e.g., the inventory of forests and the preparation of management plans.

The Commission shall continue to engage and interact with the Forest Products Association (FPA) which represents the interests of a number of members engaged in business activities in the forest sector. The association is a non-governmental organisation which has been in existence since 1944 and is involved in the promotion and development of the interests of the forest sector and collaborates on activities such as training, information, public awareness and institutional development.

Similarly, the GFC shall engage and support other organisations such as small loggers' associations which are increasing in number, and represent small operators from mainly forest-dependent, low income communities. The Commission's Community Forestry Programme shall be the main mechanism through which this collaboration shall be fostered.

Generally, a sustainable mechanism for engagement of the private sector shall be refined and maintained by the GFC and the Government in consultation with stakeholders.

PART VIII

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND COLLABORATION /LINKAGES

In response to the multiple values of the forest resource in Guyana, there are a number of key stakeholder organisations which are involved in the regulation, commercial utilisation, socio-economic development and conservation in Guyana. It is therefore necessary that the Guyana Forestry Commission continue to collaborate with these entities, some of which have legislation, regulations, guidelines which are complimentary to the mandate of the Commission.

Guyana is a signatory to a number of International Conventions and Treaties. Principal among these are:

- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC);
- United National Convention on Biological Diversity; and
- United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Guyana signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in June 13, 1992 and ratified it on August 29, 1994. The Convention entered into force for Guyana on November 17, 1994. In response to its commitments, Guyana developed its Initial National Communication and a National Action Plan to address climate change and its adverse impacts. The Second National Communication is currently being developed. In the context of the UNFCCC the forest sector is of importance since forests act as a sink for carbon dioxide.

Recognition that “without a significant slowing of deforestation in tropical countries, stabilizing greenhouse gas concentrations and reducing the risk of catastrophic climate change will be virtually impossible” was championed by Dr. Bharrat Jadgeo, President of the Republic of Guyana and lead to the Guyana’s development of a paper outlining how the UNFCCC process could create the incentives to make national development and avoiding deforestation complementary and not competing objectives.¹⁰ This preceded the crafting of Guyana’s LCDS.

The Commission will support this concept; further activities are outlined in the next section, and continue to support Guyana’s obligations under the UNFCCC.

Low Carbon Development Strategy/REDD+

Against the framework outlined in the LCDS, on November 9, 2009, the Government of Guyana and the Kingdom of Norway signed a Memorandum of Understanding which sets out how the two countries will “work together to provide the world with a relevant, replicable model for how REDD-plus can align the development objectives of forest countries with the world’s need to

¹⁰ Office of the President. 2008. *Saving the World’s Forests Today: Creating Incentives to Avoid Deforestation*.

combat climate change.” The objective of the MOU is to foster partnership between Guyana and Norway on issues of climate change, biodiversity and sustainable, low carbon development. Accompanying the MoU is a Joint Concept Note that details the main aspects of the agreement which are: sustainable forest management; maintaining a low rate of deforestation and forest degradation; strengthening various identified REDD+ enabling indicators and activities for accelerating REDD+ efforts; reporting on REDD+ performance indicators of which forest legality is one aspect, among other areas.

In this regard, the Guyana Forestry Commission is committed to supporting:

- A regular, systematic policy and political dialogue to facilitate a constructive exchange of views on global climate change and relevant environmental issues, such as biodiversity
- Collaboration, knowledge building, and sharing of lessons learned within the field of sustainable, low-carbon development, with REDD-plus as the key component of this.
- Collaboration on REDD-plus.

Guyana’s efforts to reduce deforestation and forest degradation, including forest conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks (REDD-plus), are being developed in a consistent manner, through the World Bank’s Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF).

The general objectives of Guyana’s REDD+ Readiness efforts are: (i) to identify and conduct analytical and diagnostic studies relevant for designing Guyana’s REDD-plus strategy; (ii) to design a Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) system and the Management, Implementation, and Evaluation Framework; and (iii) to present studies, conduct consultations and other preparation activities in the preparation phase. Therefore, through this readiness preparation phase, Guyana aims to implement REDD-plus activities geared towards the future implementation of REDD-plus strategies and transactions. The outcome of this phase would be a REDD-plus readiness package for Guyana, which would include: a Reference Scenario, an MRV system, a number of REDD-plus strategies to be implemented, a conducive strategic/ policy framework, a continued Consultation/Participation Plan, and an equitable benefits-sharing mechanism.

The Commission is committed to implementing Guyana’s RPP. In particular, the Commission is committed to:

- A Continuous consultation process
- Preparation of the REDD-plus strategy
- Development of a Reference scenario
- Design of a Monitoring, Report and Verification System

Moreover, the GoG has developed a system of Independent Forest Monitoring that will be subject to independent third party verification. This initiative will boost the GFC’s efforts to ensure that all forest produce originating from State Forests satisfy the established criteria for legality since the Commission’s integral role of monitoring is for compliance with forest laws, rules and regulations. Such verification of compliance to the national log tagging and tracking

system, environmental monitoring are enabled through the increasing number of fixed and mobile stations.

United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity

Guyana became a signatory to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD/CBD) on June 13, 1992 at the UNCED in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Two years later, on August 29, 1994, Guyana ratified the CBD. By signing on to CBD, Guyana has signaled to the international community that it is committed to implementing the agreed upon measures to conserve and sustainably utilize the country's biological resources.

As a signatory to the Convention, Guyana's obligations include development of national strategies, plans and programmes for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity; Identification and Monitoring of biological diversity; In-situ conservation; Ex-situ conservation; Sustainable Use of Components of Biological Diversity; Incentive Measures (economically and socially sound measures that act as incentives for conservation and sustainable use of component of Biological Diversity); Research and Training; Public Education and Awareness; Impact Assessment and Minimizing Adverse Impacts; Access to Genetic Resources (for environmentally sound uses); Access to and Transfer of Technology; Exchange of information; Technical and Scientific Cooperation; Handling of Biotechnology and Distribution of its Benefits; and Provision of Financial Resources (to undertake, in accordance with capabilities, the objectives of the Convention with its national plans, priorities and programmes).

One of the first tasks undertaken was the development of a National Strategy and Action Plan to integrate the implementation of the CBD into national development. This action plan, called the National Biodiversity Action Plan (1999-2004) (NBAP), was prepared in November 1999. The overall goal of the NBAP was "to promote and achieve the conservation of Guyana's biodiversity, to use its components in a sustainable way, and to encourage the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the use of Guyana's biodiversity".

In 2004, the EPA, with assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducted a review of the NBAP to identify the achievements and set-backs, and to plan for a second action plan – National Biodiversity Action Plan (2007-2011). As a follow-up to the review, and within the framework of goals and objectives established for NBAP, the EPA developed a National Biodiversity Action Plan II (NBAP II) for the period 2007-2011 with funding support from the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). NBAP II is not considered a separate plan from NBAP, but a continuation of the planning process with a focus on four main thematic areas of forests, agriculture, coastal resources, and marine and freshwater resources.¹¹ Therefore, the overall goal remains the same.

The Commission will continue to support the NBAP II and is committed to functioning as the Executing/lead Agency for the following specific projects under the NBAP II:

- Development of planning and operational guidelines for synergistic utilisation of natural resources in the State Forests of Guyana under the programme area Integrated Land Use Planning; and

¹¹ Environmental Protection Agency. 2007. *National Biodiversity Action Plan II (2007-2011)*.

- Development of protocols and project concepts for the sustainable and economic utilisation of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) in hinterland communities in Guyana under the programme area Priority Sustainable Initiatives in the Forestry Sector.

Furthermore, in keeping with provisions of the CBD, the 2002 Bonn Guidelines on Access to Genetic Resources and Fair and Equitable Sharing of the Benefits Arising out of their Utilization and in response to the international interest in the biodiversity of Guyana which has attracted researchers and institutions worldwide, Guyana, in 2006, developed its National Policy on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits arising from their Utilisation (ABS). This national policy aims to facilitate access to Guyana's genetic resources through promoting fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of their use. Moreover, it is particularly concerned with the knowledge, innovations and practices of Amerindian and local communities in Guyana. It governs all genetic resources, excluding human genetic resources that are within the territorial limits of Guyana, including its territorial sea.¹² The Commission would continue to support the ABS.

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

Guyana ratified the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) on September 24, 1997 and thus joined the international community in the recognition that desertification is a major economic, social and environmental problem of concern.

The fundamental obligation under the Convention is the preparation national reports on steps taken to implement the Convention. Three National Reports to the Convention were submitted in 2000, 2002 and 2006. The last report identified a number of priority issues that need to be addressed in order to prevent and mitigate land degradation and desertification and to move towards sustainable land management. One of these issues is the need for a Land Use Policy to set the overarching framework for sustainable land management.¹³ It is expected that this policy will identify guidelines for land use as well as criteria for multiple land uses. This issue has been previously identified as required under this revised NFPS; the Commission would continue to support Guyana's obligations under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

Mangroves

Although there have been a number of efforts directed at managing the mangrove forests in Guyana, none have resulted in significant actions. The GFC, in collaboration with the EPA, wrote and adopted the first Mangrove Management Action Plan of 2001. While there were several partial updates of this plan since then, none have been finalised or adopted.

While there are at least ten agencies involved directly or indirectly in the management of mangroves in Guyana, the two with the most significant, day-to-day involvement with mangrove

¹² Environmental Protection Agency. 2007. *National Policy on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization*

¹³ The Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission. 2006. *Guyana's Third National Report on the Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification*.

management are Sea and River the Defence Department (S&RDD) and the GFC. The legislative framework for immediate protection of mangroves already exists, as it is within the power of the Minister to declare any tree as a protected species and on January 29, 2010 in exercise of the powers conferred upon him by section 42 of the Forest Act and after consultation with the Guyana Forestry Commission the Minister of Agriculture made an amendment of Regulation 17 of the Principal Regulations by the substitution of the following:

“Protected Trees” 17. (1) “No bullet-wood tree or red, black or white mangrove trees shall be felled without first obtaining the permission in writing of an authorized forest officer not below the rank of an Assistant Commissioner of Forests”

A new EU financed Global Climate Change Alliance programme entitled Sustainable Coastal Zone Protection through Mangrove Management has also recently been launched. The objective of the programme is to abate climate (carbon sequestration through reforestation and forest preservation) change and to mitigate its effects via enhanced sea defence biodiversity. A requirement of this project was the establishment of an overarching committee, called the Mangrove Action Committee (MAC). MAC consists of representatives of all stakeholders who represent inter-agency commitment to the restoration and management of mangroves. The function of the committee is to oversee the progress towards meeting the goals of the National Mangrove Management Action Plan (NMMAP) which was drafted in 2010.

The specific objectives of this plan are:

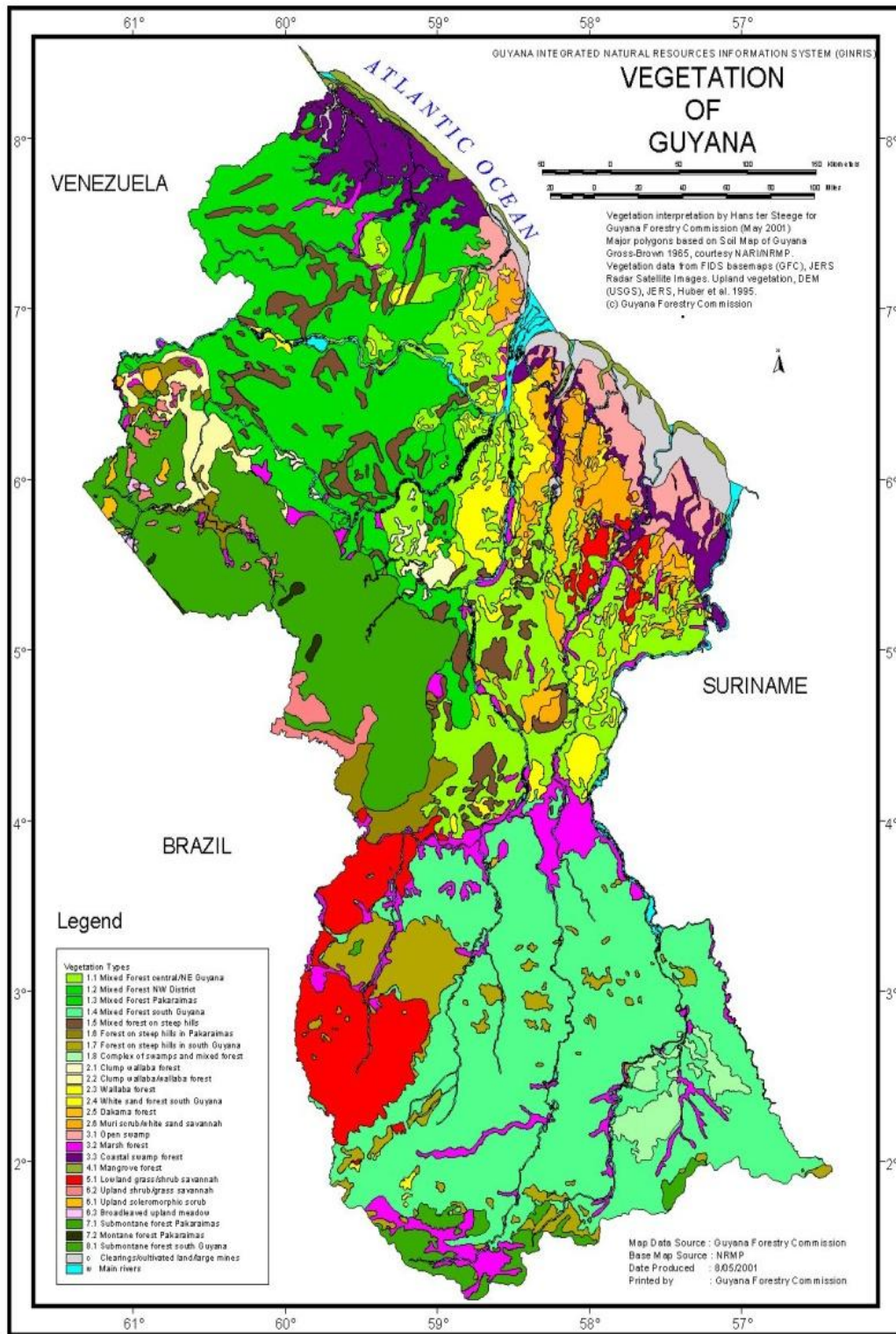
- To establish the administrative capacity for the management of mangroves in Guyana
- To promote sustainable management of mangrove forest.
- To establish and complete a legal framework for mangrove ecosystem management which encourages community-based participation.
- To support research and development of Guyana’s mangrove forest
- To develop effective protection and/or rehabilitation of mangrove ecosystems
- To increase public awareness and education on the benefits of the mangrove forests

The Commission is a stakeholder in the implementation of this Plan. In particular,

- The GFC will continue to be a representative of the Mangrove Action Committee (MAC) which was established to oversee the progress towards meeting the goals of the Mangrove Management Action Plan.
- The GFC will fulfil the Memorandum of Understanding for the mapping and inventory of the mangrove forest.
- Personnel of the Commission shall receive training in monitoring and reporting on mangrove activities along the sea defence.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Vegetative Map of Guyana



Appendix 2: Forest Resources Allocation Map 2011

