

<b>Project 14: North American Collaboration for Conservation of Transboundary Protected Areas</b>		<b>Operating Year(s): 2013–2014</b>
<b>Planned Budget for two years: C\$300,000</b> <b>Year 1: C\$200,000</b> <b>Year 2: C\$100,000</b>		
<b>Strategic Priority/Objective:</b> Healthy Communities and Ecosystems / Increased Resilience of Shared Ecosystems at Risk		
<b>Project Summary</b> <p>This project aims to increase the health and resiliency of transboundary ecosystems and communities in the Big Bend-Río Bravo (BBRB) region by maintaining or restoring the ecological health, connectivity, and resilience to climate change of shared ecosystems, and the communities and natural resource-based sectors that depend on them for important ecosystem services that may become more scarce as the climate changes. Based on the recommendations made in the BBRB Conservation Assessment, on-the-ground work in conservation and restoration will be carried out, including education and outreach activities with private landowners, park visitors, and the public and other partners in the region. Specifically, the BBRB region will advance regional strategic planning and implementation of conservation actions, initiate climate change adaptive management, and conduct carrying capacity assessment at eco-recreational sites in the Maderas del Carmen protected area.</p>		
<b>Short-term Outcomes (at halfway point)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North American network of transboundary conservation partnerships comprised of stakeholders from federal and state land management agencies, NGOs, universities, community organizations, corporate entities, private landowners, and riverside and border communities.</li> <li>• Information sharing on conservation and climate change adaptive management planning.</li> <li>• First phase of climate change adaptive management planning in the BBRB region.</li> </ul>		
<b>Long-term Outcomes (by the end of the project)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased regional and trilateral capacity and knowledge related to adaptive management and restoration of ecosystems to benefit people and native species in the face of a changing climate and other large scale ecosystem drivers.</li> <li>• Conservation, monitoring and restoration actions in degraded ecosystems, and education and outreach activities with private landowners, park visitors, the public and other partners in the region.</li> </ul>		
<b>Longer-term, environmental outcome (post-project)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased regional and trilateral capacity to implement binational coordinated adaptive management to improve ecosystem and community health and resiliency given climate change and other drivers of change.</li> <li>• Improved status of conservation targets (species and physical processes) identified in the BBRB Conservation Assessment.</li> <li>• Improved resiliency of ecosystems and communities in the BBRB region, and beyond.</li> <li>• Improved public and visitor understanding of, connection with, and support for protected areas, other ecosystems, and their conservation in the region.</li> <li>• Reduced dependence of local communities on unsustainable economic activities in the BBRB region.</li> </ul>		

**Tasks necessary to reach the environmental outcome:**

- 1) Prioritize management actions and develop strategies for achieving them
- 2) Implement priority conservation and monitoring activities
- 3) Environmental impact and capacity assessment in Maderas del Carmen

**Task 1) Prioritize management actions and develop strategies for achieving them**

<b>Subtask</b>	<b>Project outputs</b>	<b>How does the subtask/output move the project towards the environmental outcome</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Budget (activities)</b>
1.1 Meeting to identify opportunities to collaborate on conservation/restoration of priority ecosystems of common interest and to create a work plan	Meeting with managers, scientists and other stakeholders to share lessons learned on conservation and adaptive management planning, management priorities and near-term actions, data needs, and other gaps. Coordination meeting with the working group to plan and agree on the implementation of each project subtask.	The group will identify successful strategic actions to conserve and restore native species, ecosystem processes, and ecosystem services, and to support local communities.	Fall-Winter 2013–2014	Year 1: C\$33,000
1.2 Climate change adaptive management	Initiate work on climate change adaptive management planning in the BBRB region.	Adaptive management planning will help plan for an uncertain future and identify actions that are most likely to be beneficial.	Winter 2013–2014	Year 1: C\$50,000

**Task 2) Implement priority conservation and monitoring activities**

<b>Subtask</b>	<b>Project outputs</b>	<b>How does the subtask/output move the project towards the environmental outcome</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Budget (activities)</b>
2.1 Implement recommended conservation actions and monitoring on both public and private lands to improve landscape and community resilience.	Actions will be determined. Education and outreach activities will be carried out with private landowners, park visitors, and the public and other partners in the region.	Conservation and active ecosystem management practices will help to maintain or restore the ecological health, connectivity, and resilience to climate change (or assist in the adaptation to climate change) of shared ecosystems and the	Fall 2013–Spring 2015	Year 1: C\$80,000 Year 2: C\$100,000

		<p>communities and natural resource-based sectors that depend on them for important ecosystem services that may become more scarce as the climate changes.</p> <p>Engagement of communities, visitors, the public, and other partners and stakeholders will help to build support for protected areas, other conservation initiatives, and good ecosystem management practices, thus increasing the long-term sustainability of project outcomes.</p>		
2.2 Publications from OP 2011–2012	<p>Publication cost and outreach for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Proposal for Developing Desired Future Conditions for the Big Bend Reach of the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo (OP11-12/ task 2.1)</li> <li>• Conservation Assessment – document and launch (OP11-12/ task 2.2)</li> </ul> <p>Communications needs (e.g., website)</p>		Fall 2013	Year 1: C\$12,000
<b>Task 3) Environmental impact and capacity assessment in Maderas del Carmen</b>				
<b>Subtask</b>	<b>Project outputs</b>	<b>How does the subtask/output move the project towards the environmental outcome</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Budget (activities)</b>
3.1 Evaluate and manage visitor use and carrying capacity at ecotourism recreational sites in the	Identify potential ecotourism recreational sites and routes and determine their carrying capacity based on the concept of <i>Límites de cambio aceptable</i> . Sustainable	Collaborative efforts between local municipalities and protected areas will help meet the conservation targets of the protected area, and increase	Fall 2013	Year 1: C\$25,000

Mexican protected areas.	landscape and architectural design will be developed to manage visitor use.	sustainable development of local economies through ecotourism.		
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**Explain how this project meets the selection criteria adopted by Council in the Strategic Plan (See below)**

*The goal of all projects funded by the CEC will be to support the efforts of the Parties to conserve, protect and/or enhance the North American environment. The following criteria will guide the Secretariat, Working Groups, Committees, and other appropriate officials of the Parties in considering cooperative activities for Council approval under operational plans. These selection criteria do not apply for activities to be funded through the NAPECA grant program.*

- **How does the project contribute to achieving Council's strategic objectives as described within the current Strategic Plan, or as related to other priorities subsequently confirmed by Council?**

This project falls under strategic objective 2, "Increased resilience of shared ecosystems at risk." The Big Bend-Río Bravo region is recognized for its unique biodiversity and landscape. This project will help maintain or restore the ecological health, connectivity, and resilience to climate change (or assist in the adaptation to climate change) of those shared ecosystems, and the communities and natural resource-based sectors (e.g., agriculture) that depend on them for important ecosystem services that may become more scarce as the climate changes.

- **Are the proposed objectives North American in scope? In other words, how are the proposed results relevant to protecting the environment in North America? (For example, what would Council members announce to the press at the successful completion of this project?)**

The project focuses on conserving transboundary landscapes that share common ecosystems such as grasslands, forests, and headwaters. The work plan will draw from experiences acquired by managers and scientists to share capacities and best practices in implementing priority conservation actions, and developing climate change adaptive management.

- **What are the specific, clear and tangible results that will be achieved and how will progress toward each result be measured over time? Identify performance measures to be used to indicate success at reaching all outcomes and/or performance.**

A meeting will bring managers and conservationists from the BBRB region and beyond to share experiences on determining priority actions, steps to adaptive management planning, and community outreach. Possible performance measures will include:

- A broad-scale process and framework for adaptive management that integrates climate change information, addresses uncertainty related to management actions, and can be applied to priority ecosystems.

- Number of restoration activities implemented.
  - Number of acres of ecosystems being restored or where sustainable rangeland management practices or other good ecosystem management practices are being implemented as a result of this project.
  - Number of local people participating in ecosystem management workshops and employment programs related to green jobs and sustainable or low carbon economies.
- **Explain why the CEC is the most effective vehicle for the Parties to undertake the project.**

This project directly responds to the CEC's strategic plan to approach conservation at an ecosystem level and build collaboration among multiple agencies to tackle the transboundary conservation of landscapes. While there is a diverse range of actors in the region, the CEC brings unique, neutral authority to convene multiple decision-makers and stakeholders from across jurisdictional lines and encourage them to embrace the paradigm shift that is needed to integrate conservation planning on a landscape scale. The CEC is also uniquely situated to assist the conservation partners in the Big Bend-Río Bravo region in building a model for transboundary, landscape-scale conservation partnerships and identifying, extracting, and disseminating lessons learned from the region for application in multi-jurisdictional landscapes across the continent. By focusing on transboundary conservation, cooperation, and communication and identifying linkages between communities and science-based resource management organizations, the CEC's support for these efforts will produce and test in diverse settings a model that will demonstrate the feasibility and benefits of landscape-scale conservation cooperation, and inform other transboundary conservation partnerships.

The BBRB region has developed a broad network of stakeholders comprised of federal, state/provincial, local and tribal authorities, NGOs and community organizations that inform and collaborate on the implementation of conservation and management activities. The CEC's contribution will be invaluable in leveraging other potential resources to contribute to this effort. Private foundations, for example, may be interested in following the CEC's lead in investing in positive efforts to promote cooperation and conservation in North America's border regions as a way to promote a positive counterpoint to public concerns about the security risks plaguing our border areas in North America.

- **Does the project propose a clear timeline for implementation of the activities, including a target end date for CEC's involvement? Where applicable, describe how the work will continue after CEC involvement ends.**

The activities and associated timeline are described above. The Big Bend Conservation Collaborative will continue beyond CEC involvement. The group is actively seeking funding from multiple sources to continue conservation activities and planning.

- **Where applicable, identify with reasonable specificity:**
  - **Linkages with other relevant CEC projects, past or present, in order to create synergies, capitalize on experience, or avoid duplication**

This project builds on the work completed in the 2011–2012 *Big Bend-Río Bravo Collaboration for Transboundary Landscape Conservation* project. Recommendations made in 2011–2012 were used to create the work plan for 2013–2014.

- **The target audience, as well as its receptivity and capacity to use the information that may be produced as a result of the project**

Outreach activities and workshops will take place with private landowners and community members in the border region. Park visitors, the public and other partners in the region will benefit from the environmental outcome of this project.

- **The beneficiaries of capacity building activities that the project may include**

Workshops will be carried out to share best practices in working with border communities, creating ecotourism and green jobs opportunities, and community relationship development in general. Additional activities will develop, and implement strategies and eco-technologies to meet capacity and education needs for assisting border communities in Mexico.

- **The relevant stakeholders, with particular attention to communities, academia, NGOs and industry, and their involvement and contribution to a successful outcome**

Numerous provincial, federal and state land management agencies, NGOs, universities, community organizations, corporate entities, private landowners, and riverside and border communities are key stakeholders in the BBRB region. In the Big Bend-Río Bravo region, large corporations, such as Cementos Mexicanos (CEMEX) and Coca Cola are making significant financial contributions to conservation that relate to this project.