Tourism Management in the Tapajos National Forest (Brazil)

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Funding Partners
Location of the Study Site
Context

- Long history of extractive products
- Previously—history of illegal timber extraction
- Need identified: engage the local forest residents in an effort to improve situation
Project Goals/Principles

- Connect Brazilians and international visitors with the country’s rich natural and cultural heritage.
- Identify and strengthen the sense of place that protected areas represent.
- Recognize and strengthen the interconnections that support a sustainable protected area public use program.
- Cultivate community engagement and stewardship through a collaborative approach.
- Manage ICMBio protected area as part of larger landscapes and social/economic systems.
- Integrate public use planning and implementation into ICMBio mission.
Focus Areas

• Plan and develop **appropriate public use settings and experiences**.

• **Know the visitors and stakeholders**--the community, educational, industry, and nonprofits and work with them to forge strategic partnerships and promote citizen stewardship.

• **Develop the workforce**--including ICMBio staff, contractors, volunteers and other community service providers.
Expected Outcomes

- Contribute to sustainable communities and public lands.
- Enhance public use opportunities in appropriate settings.
- Leverage resources and increase capacity of ICMBio and partners.
- Promote citizen stewardship and shared responsibility.
- Strengthened connections between people and their public lands.
Planning and Management Tools

- Planning methodologies for overall public use and plans focusing on trails, interpretation, and visitor experiences/tourism.
- Visitor and community use and experience satisfaction monitoring.
- Community engagement through meetings and collaborative projects.
- Training that ranges from broad based professional development to specific skill development.
Our Approach

Focus on:

• Trails
• Interpretation
• Tourism
• Training
Actions Necessary to Accomplish Goals

Actions focused on four key attributes:

Management Actions
Infrastructure Actions
Trails/Access Actions
Information and Interpretation Actions
Methodology/Strategy

Management Actions

• Ensure funds and assistance are delivered directly to local partners in support of the concept and practice of community-based management.

• Implemented a visitor monitoring package including road and boat access counts, trail use counts, visitor surveys, and economic indicators.
Methodology/Strategy

Infrastructure

• Seek a visible presence for the Tapajos and partners in a local tourism community.

• Completed initial site survey, water well capacity, and program needs for three key traditional communities (Jamaracua, Maguary, and Sao Domingo).

• Removed dilapidated structures at the Terra Rica site, developed a kitchen, restroom, pavilion, generator power for a well and basic electric power.
Methodology/Strategy

Trails/Access

• Designed and constructed the Terra Rica Trail; a 1.6km loop trail that features universal design for easy access.

• Reviewed and completed trail condition surveys on other existing trails.

• Made recommendations for future trail improvements to accommodate mountain bike use.
Methodology/Strategy

Information/Interpretation

• Stakeholder workshop attended by about 35 participants.
• Draft Interpretive Plan was completed.
• Management goals and objectives, and interpretive themes completed and translated.
• Completed text development, design, layout, creation of artwork, fabrication, and installation of bilingual interpretive signs for the Terra Rica Trail
• Completed orientation panels for three communities and four ICMBio Bases.
Results

The Completed Trail
The trail now features 8 interpretive signs that celebrate the iconic Amazon rainforest ecosystem and the Tapajos National Forest, showcases the craftsmanship and talent of local artists, and truly reflects the partnerships between communities, agencies, and countries that brought the trail to life.

The Future of Terra Rica
Several school and tour groups have visited the sites. The ultra-extreme “Jungle Marathon” is taking place there now. All use is being documented as another part of the overall Public Use Demonstration Project which involves a year-long effort to monitor visitor use and experiences in the Forest and to the communities.

With the skills and success gained in this project, the Forest staff, communities, and cooperative are now poised to launch additional efforts to build sustainable tourism and public use into the portfolio of collaborative forest management.
Tapajos Public Use Demonstration Project and the Terra Rica Interpretive Trail

- March 2014—Team completed a 10-day assessment trip to the Tapajos and worked with local Forest staff. One primary facet focused on the development of the Terra Rica Interpretive Trail.

- May 3-14—Team members returned to work with Tapajos partners to design and construct a 1.6 kilometer loop trail at Terra Rica. Provided on-the-job training for locals while building ICMBio capacity to conduct training across the system in the future.

- May 9 to 21—Team conducted a stakeholder meeting and drafted an Interpretive Plan for the Tapajos, identifying management objectives, target audiences, and interpretive themes.

- May 12 to June 30—Team designed, fabricated, and installed a series of 8 interpretive signs along the Terra Rica Interpretive Trail and at other key points.
Preliminary Thoughts

- Data show a unique visitor group—different than other places…a mix of Brazilians and foreign tourists

- Highly satisfied with their selection—which was expensive

- The three communities should be viewed as a model corridor, develop a niche for this community of three communities

- Expand outward from this community and replicate methods in other interested communities
Next Steps

- Visitor counts and surveys will continue through February 2016.

- A report will be developed, segmenting visitors by various variables (example—comparison between visitors from Amazon, non-Amazon and non-Brazilian visitors). Do they desire similar experiences?

- Focus on Terra Rica Trail—what do these visitors desire? Is this in synch with what we are offering?

- Develop trail monitoring program for TRT

- Replicate and extend in other locations in the Amazon in FY2015
Conclusions

• Built an initial baseline of visitor use data and the first systematic data collection process in Brazil parks and protected areas
• Developed a recreation setting and created outdoor recreation opportunities
• Focused on ensuring tourists had the opportunity to purchase local forest products
• Visitors are coming to the Terra Rica Trail
• Many ICMBio staff received training
• Actively engaged the local communities
Conclusions

• The data gathered and lessons learned over the past year will be reviewed and used to evaluate a series of longer-term ideas and actions that came out of our initial planning sessions.

• These will allow the ICMBio to plan for the next phases of public use development on the Forest in a manner that is sustainable, consistent with the broader goals of resource protection of the conservation unit, and demonstrates the commitment and practice of collaborative, community-based management that is the hallmark of the Tapajos.