



Protecting Ecosystems WAY Across Boundaries

Carleen Yocum from the Wayne National Forest helps the US Forest Service provide technical assistance to Honduran Forestry Agency in January 2007.



Carleen Yocum and Chip Scott with Honduran foresters at a field unit.

When it comes to meeting conservation goals, Forest Service employees go the extra step to protect ecosystems across boundaries. That objective recently took Carleen Yocum back to Honduras to work with the Honduran National Forestry Agency (COHDEFOR) in the management of their pine forests. Yocum, along with Charles "Chip" Scott, Northern Research Station traveled to Honduras for 10 days in January to follow-up on previous work they and other FS employees had done. Since the early 1990's Carleen has traveled to Honduras on short-term work assignments nearly a dozen times.

The US Forest Service has been providing technical assistance to COHDEFOR for more than 18 years. The current Chief of the Honduran forestry agency is committed to taking advantage of the long history of collaborative efforts between the two agencies. Through USFS short and long-term technical assistance, COHDEFOR has improved its capacity to develop forest management plans, reform timber appraisal, build low-impact forest roads, monitor regeneration, better manage forest pests and diseases and improve wood processing efficiency.

Yocum explains, "Currently, the Forest Service provides technical assistance to COHDEFOR through an agreement with USAID. We have a long history of cooperation between the three agencies and relationships that have been forged over the years between the resource specialists of the two countries."

Specifically on this trip, Scott and Yocum looked at regeneration check methodology and forest inventory protocols. Their time was divided between field and office work. Yocum notes, "We were pleased that as a result of our recommendations, COHDEFOR will install permanent forest inventory plots on all their National Forest lands." She explained that among other information, this will provide more accurate estimates of sustainable use in

these pine forests.

Honduran forestry law requires all commercially logged forest areas be adequately regenerated, naturally or artificially, by the second growing season after harvest. The forestry agency has had difficulty assuring that this is the case, however. "We recommended a simple yet useful method for determining adequate regeneration," said Yocum. "The forestry sector is significant to the economy of Honduras, and ensuring forest regeneration is critical to sustaining the forest cover of the Central American country."

Additionally, Yocum and Scott made recommendations regarding environmental assessment and land management planning. Yocum noted that currently environmental impacts are poorly addressed under Honduran forest management plans. She was pleased to achieve buy-in from the Chief of COHDEFOR to more effectively address this issue. They also prepared scopes of work for two future short-term assignments regarding environmental assessments procedures and land management planning, which will be staffed by FS employees under the agreement between USFS and USAID.

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