Project- Manatee monitoring and habitat conservation in Lake Piso basin, Western Liberia
Monitoring Training and GPS Recording of West African Manatee spots on the Mafa River and Lake Piso.

BACKGROUND/INTRODUCTION:

The intensive livelihood activities, including dangerous fishing, farming, hunting and firewood harvesting in the Lake Piso and Mafa River have threatened the existence of manatee in the area. The activity has also been other creeks in the area. The project is intended sensitize local community on the need to conserve manatee , as well as to identify and record nesting and breeding sites within the Maffa River, the Lake Piso and other rivers and creeks in the area using GPS. It will also carry out initiatives to determine the animal's presence or absence, as well as document the animal movement population trend in the area. The local communities (particularly fishermen, hunters, farmers, fuel wood harvesters and selected community-based grassroots organizations) will be trained to be able to monitor the animal in the areas using datasheet. In 2010, the Farmers Associated to Conserve the Environment (FACE) submitted a proposal to the Rufford Small Grant (RSG) for possible funding consideration. The proposal was approved and the sum of Euro 5646.43 made available to FACE to carry out some intervention to help address the situation mentioned above at the site. Duration of this intervention is twelve (12) months commencing from May 2010 to April 2011.
This report covered findings from a trip to the site to train local community in manatee monitoring using datasheet, as well as to document nesting and breeding sites using GPS.

FINDINGS;

Training in the use of GPS and Manatee Monitoring datasheet:

The FACE team from Monrovia in collaboration with its field staff trained eight local community dwellers in the use of the GPS and datasheet to monitor manatee in their respective locality. Before the training, the local authority in the targeted community was requested to nominate two people to be trained by the project. Two persons were recruited from each of the community by the local authority and presented to the team to be trained. The training was hundred percent practical and afforded the trainees the opportunity to work with the survey team to learn how GPS recordings are done, as well as how monitoring of the manatee is carried out using the datasheet.

Criteria used for the selection of the candidates in the various communities for the training were as following;

- Nominee should have a good understanding of the terrain and the areas the animal can be found in order to lead the team to those areas.
- Nominee should know the animal in questioned and should have some level of skill in read and write to be able to fill up the monitoring datasheet after the training.

Sawelor

The team visited Sawelor on 20 July 2010 and upon arrival recruited, was able to receive the community's nominees for the manatee monitoring training. The two persons nominated for the training by the Town for the training were Mr. Boima Paasewe and Mr. Lamie Sambolah. That same day the training was conducted and the

GPS recording of the manatee spots identified by the community dwellers visited and recorded. Three spots were recorded during the visit among which the team was informed that one of them was a breeding site because the animal is all the time seen in that location with the young one. During the breeding period, it usually drove away fisherman attempting to go toward that patch of mangrove to protect the young. The site in questioned coordinate is 29N 0241395, UTM 0750638. See below summary.

Kumia:

Having successfully completed the training and recording at Sawelor, the team proceeded to the Kumia Community about 4 km from Sawelor the same day, 20 July 2010 to continue the task. As usually upon arrival, the two community members were recruited to form part of the team to conduct the recording and at the same time to be trained to carrying out monitoring of the animals. Three sites were also recorded in this area and interestingly, the team was told that the animal was seen at those a week before the team arrival for the recording. Those trained in this community were Mahamadu Kiazolu and Momo Kromah and are expected to carry out the monitoring of the animal using the data provided them by FACE while carrying out their daily activities in the area. See summary table for other details.

Kebah

On 21 July 2010, the team conducted the survey in Kebah and as usual the team through the Town Chief recruited the two local community members in person of Mr. Tonie Perry and Siaffa Kiadole to be trained. The two formed part of the survey team and was trained in the manatee monitoring process. The two men like all the others trained, were provided the datasheet, torchlight and batteries for the monitoring of the animal in their respective community. The team recorded four spots including three feeding and one breeding sites based on information received from the local community dwellers.

Tallah & Waima:

Tallah is a township found along the shore of the Lake Piso between Tewor and Commonwealth Districts in Grand Cape Mount County. It was founded in 1924, first township in Cape Mount and originally a Congo settlement (Americo-Liberians). The name "Talla" means 'come and see'; during WWII, this place was called small New York – the whole place was lit up, it was an American strategic base. The arrived in Tallah on 22nd July 2010 and was able to conduct the research in Tallah and Waima the same day. Three spots, one in Waima and two in Tallah were identified and recorded. The two villagers recruited for the training- Mr. James Moore and Varney Jackson told the team that apart from the two sites recorded, the manatee is usually seen in the Lake Piso whenever they go to fishing mostly during the dry season-October –April. See GPS readings of the spots recorded in the summarized below.

Conclusion:

The survey went out successfully as planned and received the cooperation of all the communities targeted by the project. It provided the opportunity for the enhancement of community capacity to participate in the protection and conservation of the manatee in the project area.

LIST OF MEMBERS OF THE SURVEY TEAM:

Names	Institution/Community	Role
Mr. Flomo P. Molubah	Farmers Associated to Conserve the Environment (FACE)	Trainer/ Team Head
Mr. Gordon B. Sambolah	Farmers Associated to Conserve the Environment (FACE)	Co-trainer
Mr. Saidu Kromah	Farmers Associated to Conserve the Environment (FACE)	Informant
Mr. Boakai Kiawen	Farmers Associated to Conserve the Environment (FACE)	Informant
Tonie Perry	Kebah	Trainee
Siaffa Kiadole	Kebah	Trainee
Boima Paasewe	Sawelor	Trainee
Lamie Sambolah	Sawelor	Trainee
Varney Perry	Kumia	Trainee
Mahamadu Kiazolu	Kumia	Trainee
James Moore	Tallah	Trainee
Varney Jackson	Tallah	Trainee

GPS Recording:

During the entire survey exercise, with the help of the local community dwellers the team successfully recorded fifteen spots in five communities the West African manatee has been sighted. The communities include Sawelor, Kebah, Kumia, Tallah and Waima. See below summarized table of the spots recorded by the team.

Date	GPS Location	Name of Informant	Nearest Settlement	Site description	Photo
Sawelor Community: 29N 0240302, UTM 0751070, Founding date and story: Early 1800 are; originally called 'Sapeeyor' (i.e. hiding in the grass). A white man came to Sowee and traded slaves gathered from Sapeeyor. When it was time to sail across the ocean, he left his wife behind. She gave birth to a child with a black man. When her husband returned, they departed but left the baby 'in the grass'. The baby girl was named 'Sambo' meaning 'gone astray'. She had many children, and when she died, a large feast was held (called 'lah' in Vai). That is how descendants became known as 'Sambo-lah'					
07-20-2010	29N0239840 UTM 0750758	Lamie Sambolah	Sawelor	It is a mangrove patch of forest along the Mafa River the manatee used for feeding on the mangrove roots.	X
07-20-2010	29N0239340 UTM 0750945	Lamie Sambolah	Sawelor	It is a mangrove patch of forest along the Mafa River the manatee used for feeding on the mangrove roots.	X
07-20-2010	29N 0241395 UTM 0750638	Boima Paasewe	Sawelor	Other name "Tongbolondor" is a patch of mangrove forest at the intersection of the entrance leading to the Kumia village along the Mafa River. The site is densely covered with mangrove on which the manatee feeds on it roots and others creatures.	X
Kumia Community: 29N 0241905, UTM 0749278. It is a small community found between Kebah and Sawelor comprised of nine (9) houses. It is about fifteen (15) minutes walk distance from the Mafa River with a population estimate between 15-20 persons.					
07-20-2010	29N 0241607 UTM 0748046	Varney Perry	Kumia	Mangrove forest along the Mafa River and the animal used the mangrove roots to feed on.	X
07-20-2010	29N 0241619 UTM 0747955	Varney Perry	Kumia	Mangrove forest along the Mafa River and the animal used the mangrove roots to feed on.	X
07-20-2010	29N 0240968 UTM 0749420	Varney Perry	Kumia	Mangrove forest along the Mafa River and the animal used the mangrove roots to feed on.	
Kebah Community: 29N 0244326, UTM 0753070. It is a small community along the shore of the Mafa River comprised of fifteen (15) houses and population range between 50-100 persons.					
07-21-2010	29N 0244076 UTM 0753379	Tonie Perry	Kebah	It is a young farm bush along the Mafa River comprised of wild cane that the manatee usually feeds on.	X
07-21-2010	29N 0243612	Siaffa Kiadole	Kebah	It is a young farm bush along the Mafa River comprised of wild cane that	

	UTM 0754057			the manatee usually feeds on.	
07-21-2010	29N 0243270 UTM 0754228	Tonie Perry	Kebah	It is a transitional forest at the intersection of the Mafa and Manii Rivers, mainly along the shore of the manii River.	X
07-21-2010	29N 0243346 UTM 0754396	Tonie Perry	Kebah	It is a low tornly bush above the intersection of the Mafa and Manii rivers on the Mafa River. This according to our informant it has is used as a breeding site by the Manatee.	X
Tallah Township Founding date & Story: 1924; 1st township in Cape Mount. Originally a Congo settlement (Americo-Liberians). Tallah means 'come and see'; during WWII, this place was called small New York – the whole place was lit up, it was an American strategic base					
07-22-2010	29N 0244472 UTM 0748707	James Moore	Tallah (Sweetland)	It is a depth area just off the shore of the lake Piso where Mr. Francis Dennis has his house on route to Waima. You have a mixture of mangrove and savannah grasses.	X
07-22-2010	29N 0245949 UTM 0749055	James Moore	Tallah (Sweetland)	It is a depth area just off the shore of the lake Piso and contain a mixture of mangrove and savannah grasses.	X
07-22-2010	29N 0246301 UTM 0749089	James Moore	Tallah (Sweetland)	The vegetation there is a mixture of savannah grasses and young farm bushes. There are few mangrove found in the area also.	
07-22-2010	29N 0243780 UTM 0748315	James Moore	Waima	The vegetation is predominately savannah grasses mixed with variety of mangrove species.	