

9 Conclusion

1. The following conclusions have been drawn as a result of considering the objectives set forth for the study:
 - 1.1 This Environmental Impact Study for Forest First's forestry project in the municipality of Puerto Carreño, Vichada (Colombia), was based on the review of national and regional laws and related social, employment and environmental regulations, as well as on FSC's Forestry Management Principles and Criteria and ILO's conventions.
 - 1.2 The base line for the forestry project's establishment area was defined in accordance with social, environmental and economic factors from the field of forestry.
 - 1.3 The identification attained of the main environmental and social impact (positive and negative) elements derived from forestry activities, and from Forest First's operational activities has allowed for recommendations by way of prevention, mitigation and compensation measures, and for the formulation of a monitoring and follow-up plan.
 - 1.4 Areas of high conservation value have been identified on the basis of primary and secondary data, leading to the definition of measures for the corresponding handling and monitoring activities implied.
2. The identification, assessment and analysis of the impact of Forest First's forestry project called for the definition of a base line, given the fact that all information available on the Puerto Carreño municipality and the Vichada Department was dispersed, out of date and/or in bibliographical textbooks of institutions. The result of this task was a set of complete information on the referred municipality, which may be considered a full and up-to-date base for decision-making and planning in the municipality.
3. The base line for the Puerto Carreño municipality leads to concluding that it is a multi-cultural municipality (including indigenous people, cattle herders and tenant farmers), with a significant biological and eco-systemic diversity representing the folklore of the settlers of Colombian plains. And this calls for the design and implementation of practices oriented at maintaining the region's culture and ecosystems.
4. This study lacks precedents of its kind for the Orinoquía region, besides the Environmental Impact Studies carried out by oil companies operating in different areas within the region and the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment by the FSC Initiative implemented in Colombia in late 2009 for the Reforestation Company Costa S.A.S (whose FMU is located in Villanueva, Casanare). In what concerns the Department of Vichada specifically, this has been the first document drawn in that respect.
5. As a result, the Social and Environmental Impact Assessment described herein becomes a framework tool for both the region and, obviously, Forest First, in addition to the fact that it was prepared upon considering the reference of provisions contained in FSC Principles & Criteria.
6. In general, the ex-ante impact identification and assessment for the implementation of Forest First's forestry project indicates that, pursuant to the characteristics of the project, all impact aspects studied are controllable and thus the project is feasible. Special care will be required concerning the project's indirect impact, such as the opening of quarries and the exploitation of materials from sand and gravel pits as a result of development of housing, associated with the arrival of population in search of working positions.

7. In what regards the matrix' results: based on 25 framework activities whose possible effects on different aspects and variables were analyzed, a total of 130 possible forms of impact were assessed and classified according to the degree of their effects.

Among these, 20.8% (27 impact effects) were classified as preventive, including the positive forms of impact mostly reflected upon society and economy. These cases of impact have been the object of recommendations referred to actions to maintain and strengthen them.

Another 66.1% (86 impact effects) relate to mitigation. The reason for this is the fact that many of the activities to perform (like harvesting) will bring along the implementation of new technologies that imply reduced impact on certain elements. The remaining 13.1% (17 impact effects) were classified as recovery, according to the values obtained.

8. Pursuant to the results of this study, a conclusion to foster is that, from the viewpoint of the elements analyzed, the project is in fact feasible, for most effects can be mitigated. This, to the extent that all actions to be implemented abide by the technical aspects and the recommendations described herein. Recommendations have been established for each of the impacts identified in the section entitled "Recommendations, Part II- EIA".
9. A special recommendation is that, as the activities are implemented, more specific studies should be defined and this framework document should be adjusted; all pursuant to social, environmental and economic criteria resulting from local regulations and from the FSC's guidelines in this respect.
10. Two aspects verified on the basis of secondary information in the evaluation of high conservation values, and in relation to reforestation practices implemented in the Puerto Carreño municipality, were: the sensitivity of the Meta River basin areas – with their great variety of heterogeneous ecosystems and significant concentration of native and migratory species –, and the exploitation of natural resources by the neighbouring communities.
11. The plantation to be established by Forest First would constitute a representative asset for the Puerto Carreño area and the Orinoquía region, in what concerns the control of natural and cultural vegetation burning, based on the principle that plantations should include processes for fire prevention and control both within plantations and in surrounding areas.

10 Appendices

10.1 Author information

This document was prepared by EBS South Africa Ltd, with content from Valoración Económica Ambiental (SAS), who were hired by Forest First Colombia S.A.S. to deliver an ESIA.

10.2 Reference bibliography

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List of Attachments

Document

1. Measures of Environmental Management of the Orinoquia Forest

Attachments

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4. Map San Cristobal
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