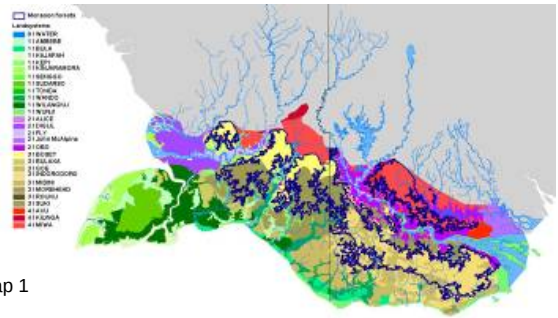
A Biodiversity Vision for the TransFly

TransFly Ecoregion - Western Province, Papua New Guinea and Merauke District, Papua, Indonesia

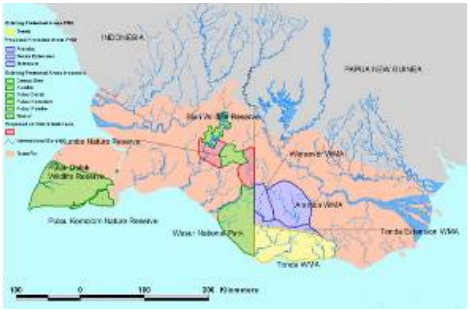
The TransFly Ecoregion Program:
A Unique approach for a unique area

The TransFly ecoregion straddles the international border of Papua New Guinea and Indonesia. This low-lying coastal region of grasslands, savannas wetlands and monsoon forest habitats covers more than 10 million ha. The area is home to some of the largest and healthiest wetlands in the Asia-Pacific region. It contains landscapes and species found nowhere else in New Guinea.

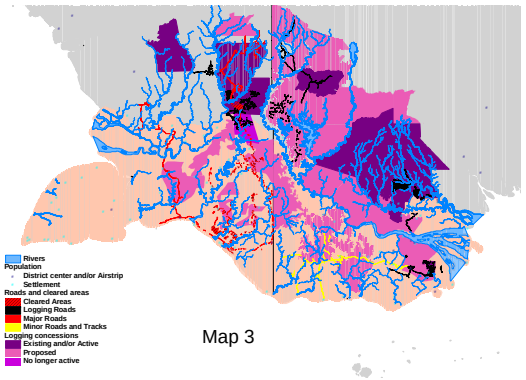
The TransFly is an ecoregion program managed jointly by WWF in PNG and Papua, Indonesia and is the first example of a cross-border terrestrial ecoregion program developed in New Guinea. A process for developing the Biodiversity Vision for the TransFly was developed with major network partners (UK, US, Australia, International) in May 2003. Throughout 2004 and 2005 various analyses have been completed that have expanded our knowledge of key species, habitats and ecological processes and in the TransFly landscapes. **48 conservation targets** have been identified that need protecting within the protected area network (map 1). The current protected area network does not protect all of these – some have no formal protection at all (map 2). WWF, DEC and local communities are working together to establish more protected areas in the TransFly to enhance the coverage of more of these conservation targets in the protected area system. More still needs to be done to ensure coverage of all targets. The biodiversity vision for the TransFly will guide this work.



Map 1



Map 2



Map 3

The TransFly:
A threatened landscape

The TransFly is under immense pressure from development threats (map 3). Large areas of native grasslands have been converted for irrigated rice cultivation and almost the entire monsoon forest area is targeted for logging. Numerous roads and settlements are developing in an ad hoc way which threaten key watersheds. Less obvious but equally devastating threats include introduction of alien weed species, exotic fish species that threaten populations of native high value barramundi and saratoga, as well as introduced deer that have brought about large scale changes to the dynamics of native grassland systems.

The TransFly: A community Vision

There are over 60 cultural groups, whose lives, customs, languages and knowledge are linked inextricably with the landscapes of the TransFly. These cultures are as unique and precious to future generations, as the habitats and species that mark this place as an outstanding feature on the world map.

While biological assessments generate spatial conservation priorities it is the sociocultural factors that will determine the success or failure of conservation initiatives. WWF is working to understand the indigenous knowledge and sociocultural values so this can inform conservation strategies to protect priority landscapes identified by scientists in the development of the biodiversity vision. Recognizing the unique cultural and biological diversity of this region, WWF is pioneering a "community visioning process" for local landowner groups that spans both sides of the political border. This approach identifies and prioritizes the landscapes, species, and traditions that have particular cultural, social, or livelihood values.

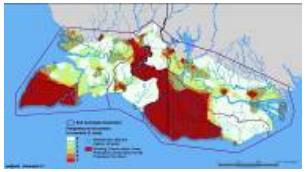
The TransFly:
The Biodiversity Vision - preparing for CBD, 2006

In August 2005 WWF and TNC worked together to analyse the coverage of the 48 conservation targets within the existing protected area network and to identify possible scenarios for conservation landscapes across the whole region. Using the CBD commitments of both countries as the foundation of the analysis, the results of this work will form a scientific basis for establishing a comprehensive, adequate and representative protected area system for the TransFly. Two examples of possible scenarios are shown below.

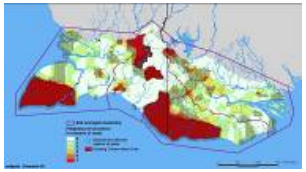
These scenarios are drafts only, generated by computer and do not represent the final product. During the last half of 2005 and the early part of 2006 WWF will be consulting widely with communities, government, NGOs and donors to socialise the biodiversity vision approach, seek input on the process and identify additional priorities that need to be considered in the final vision.

Community groups have already identified that they would like to see their ancestor routes and important cultural places also included in the biodiversity vision. These areas are being mapped in a series of community workshops and also locked into the vision.

The final step will be to work with community leaders, scientists and partner organizations to integrate the community visions and the biological vision to develop a vigorous strategy for conservation action across the TransFly. This will take place at the biodiversity vision workshop in early 2006 and will include Papua New Guinea and Indonesia. The final vision will be a blueprint for conservation, development and cultural resilience in the TransFly for the next 50 years.



Scenario 17: Existing and proposed protected areas, and corridors locked in with 20% goal. All else open



Scenario 8: Existing Conservation Areas locked with 20% goal. All else open

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