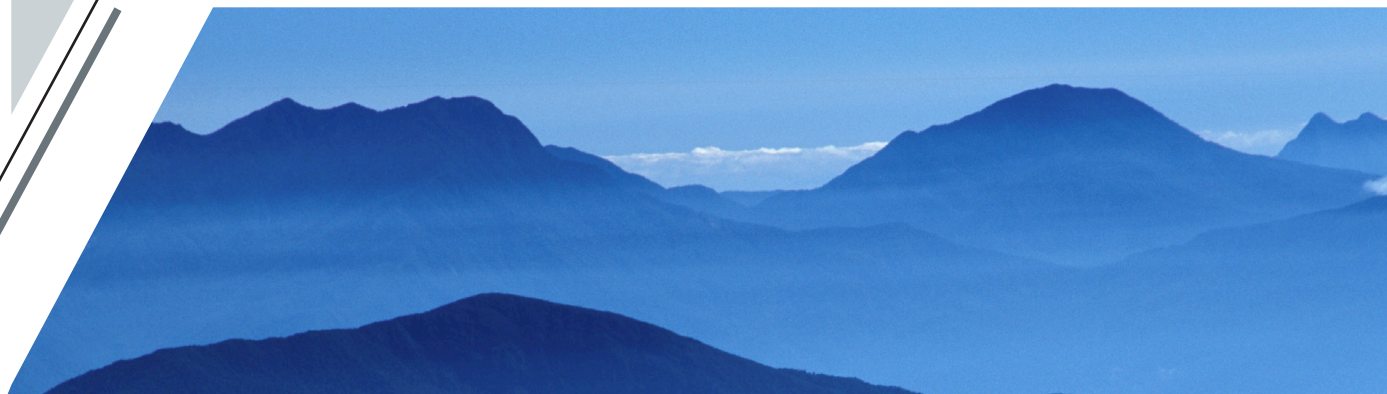


# ESTABLISHING PEACE CONDITIONS FOR THE MANAGEMENT & GOVERNANCE OF CARRASCO NATIONAL PARK, BOLIVIA



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## INTRODUCTION

Carrasco National Park (CNP) located in eastern Cochabamba, Bolivia covers 622,600 hectares. It is one of the most biologically diverse protected areas in the country. However, since its inception in October of 1991 CNP has experienced numerous conflicts related to the definition of its boundaries which were created without regard to the local communities' use of the area. As local populations continued to grow communities demanded more land, mainly to produce coca. This resulted in incidences of invasions into the park boundaries, burning of park checkpoints, and confrontations with CNP officials, especially the park rangers.

Under pressure from these conflicts, in 1991 the Bolivian government initiated several attempts to establish a "red line" identifying the formal boundary between the protected area and land for use by the local communities. Until 2006, there were no great advances delimitating the red line because communities refused to acknowledge the park boundaries. In 2007 efforts were resumed by CNP administration and, in just over three years, the park staff and local communities, under the jurisdiction of 10 municipalities, were able to come to agreement over the location of the red line boundary.

## THE PROCESS

The demarcation of the boundary line was a long and complex process supported by various organizations, including Conservation International (CI) Bolivia. A large part of CI's role was providing technical and financial support in the implementation of peacebuilding activities. This effort was led by the park rangers, who also brought an added dimension of being able to act as internal mediators given their strategic position interfacing between national government and local communities. This role was supported by their specific knowledge of the protected area, including management and legal frameworks, and ability to directly engage Quechua-speaking communities in southern portions of the park.

The development of an integrated technical approach began while working with communities in the northern section of the park. It was successful in establishing agreement between the CNP administration, social organizations and communities on the red line boundary. Important steps included:

- 1. PRELIMINARY PLANNING MEETING WITH STAKEHOLDERS** A local university explained the importance of preserving the park while maps and preset limits were reviewed to establish a work plan for creating the physical park boundary and physically constructing it in the field

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2. **USING TECHNOLOGY** Fieldwork began and points to mark the agreed upon red line were determined with handheld GPS devices.

3. **SOCIAL INVOLVEMENT** The GPS navigator points were revisited to ensure consensus with the local communities and a path was cleared and marked with red paint by the community members themselves. Their direct involvement was symbolic, since they are the people who live by the park and set its limit. The communities now clean and repaint the path on an annual basis, accompanied by a park ranger.

4. **SIGNING MINUTES TO ACKNOWLEDGE AGREEMENT** An agreement was signed by a representative of CNP and the community outlining the terms. It was accompanied by a form with topographic and intermediate points and geo-referencing of the path. Two copies of everything were signed—one for the park administration and the other for the community—to ensure the agreement would remain through changes in leadership.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- ◇ **DESIGN A METHODOLOGY THAT COMBINES TECHNICAL AND SOCIAL ASPECTS.** This experience shows that the use of technical elements (GPS, geo-references, etc.) doesn't create legitimacy or accuracy, while relying on participation and local knowledge alone (which is not without bias) makes it difficult to build consensus. An agreement was reached by combining both elements and recording them in the signed meeting minutes.
- ◇ **ESTABLISH TRUST BETWEEN ALL ACTORS ENGAGED IN THE PROCESS.** Authority and trust were generated between the park rangers and communities, and between park management and the social institutions represented by community leaders and state institutions. In the process of negotiating the red line, the park rangers and staff built confidence by balancing between flexibility and firmness, which also helped mitigate potential for conflict.
- ◇ **ENSURE SYNERGY TO SUCCESSFULLY ESTABLISH THE RED LINE.** It was not until all factors – including the political context and will, coordination between actors, application of a comprehensive methodology and internal mediation by park rangers – were understood and applied together that they achieved what they had struggled to do for 15 years.



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## CONCLUSION

The delimitation of CNP represents an important experience in reaching agreement between national government and local communities to promote the sustainable management of natural resources. An integrated technical approach has been used to guide discussions with communities in other areas of the park and provides a model for replication elsewhere in Bolivia. Finally, this process enabled the construction of an “infrastructure for peace” in the management of CNP which allowed social and institutional actors to manage emerging conflicts constructively.

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