

COOPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA

REVISED NATIONAL FOREST POLICY STATEMENT 2018



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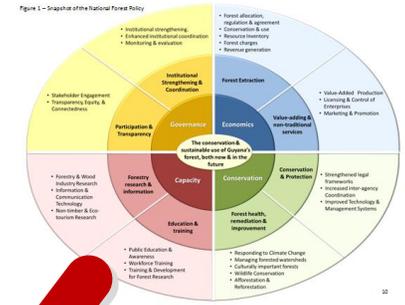
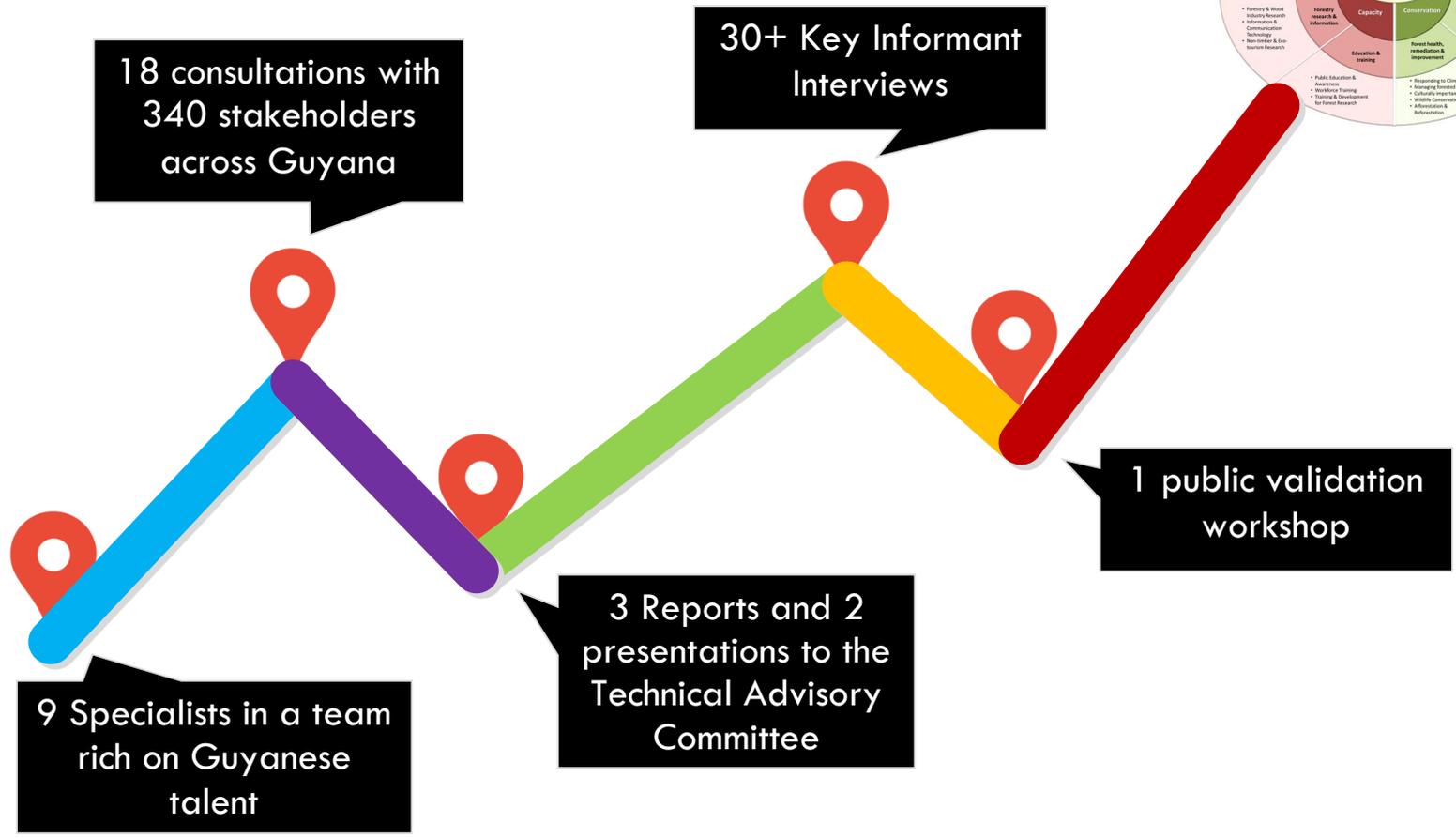
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CI	Conservation International
CRG	Cooperative Republic of Guyana
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EU FLEGT	European Union Forest Law, Enforcement, Governance and Trade
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FPA	Forest Products Association
FPDMC	Forest Products Development and Marketing Council
FTCI	Forestry Training Centre Inc.
GFC	Guyana Forestry Commission
GGDMA	Guyana Gold and Diamond Miners' Association
GGMC	Guyana Geology and Mines Commission
GLAS	Guyana Legality Assurance System
GLSC	Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GRA	Guyana Revenue Authority
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
ITTO	International Tropical Timber Organization
LCDS	Low Carbon Development Strategy
MoB&T	Ministry of Business and Tourism
MoC	Ministry of Communities
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoF	Ministry of Finance
Mol	Ministry of Infrastructure
MoIPA	Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs
MoSP	Ministry of Social Protection
MNR	Ministry of Natural Resources
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRVS	Monitoring, Reporting and Verification System
NBS	National Bureau of Standards
NFPS	Guyana's National Forest Policy Statement
NGOs	Non-governmental Organisations
NTC	National Toshias' Council
PAC	Protected Areas Commission
REDD+/REDD-plus	Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
RGDP	REDD-plus Governance Development Plan
SFPs	State Forest Permissions
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
SLUC	Special Land Use Committee
TSAs	Timber Sales Agreements
UG	University of Guyana
WCL	Wood Cutting Leases
WCMA	The Wildlife Conservation and Management Act
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

PROCESS OVERVIEW: Revising the National Forest Policy Statement & Plan



PLANNING TO SUCCEED: *A Preface to the National Forest Policy Statement*

This National Forest Policy Statement (NFPS), and associated National Forest Plan (NFP), reflect Guyana's movement away from valuing forests simply for their wood, and instead treats them as a cornerstone of the country's national patrimony; providing a host of products and services necessary to achieving the good life. Of course, an NFPS that goes beyond the timber industry can only be effectively implemented by multiple actors, across different sectors and institutional scales.

Guyana's NFPS and associated NFP lie within a complex governance architecture that involves multiple stakeholders with diverse interests, state (administration) entities, regulatory processes and international obligations. Recognition, coordination and integration of policies are important not only at the national level, but at and across all levels of government; from the community and local municipal levels to the international level. **Operationalizing the NFPS and NFP, therefore, requires time and effort to ensure that all critical personnel and authorities are in agreement and there are adequate resources to complete the task.** The NFP provides the methods by which these broad objectives are pursued and achieved, and proposes key stakeholders, in leadership and supporting roles, for the successful implementation of the activities contained within the National Forest Plan.

Although potential roles have been assigned to various stakeholder groups, these roles were primarily based on existing capacities and mandates. As such, **a follow-up round of engagement with these entities is needed to agree on roles and responsibilities for the implementation of the NFPS and NFP.** Once the new policy and plan are accepted by Cabinet and the Presidency, a more detailed planning process can begin, where each of the relevant Agencies, Organizations, and Ministries are engaged. Based on availability of resources and their own priorities, these institutions will discuss, refine and agree to their roles in implementing the Policy, and incorporating activities in their own strategic plans and work programming.

In addition to coherence across sectors and levels of government, the NFPS and NFP must also be consistent with other national and sub-national level policy frameworks. One key national policy requiring coherence with the NFPS is the Green State Development Strategy (GSDS). It would therefore be prudent to re-examine the NFP, certainly from the perspective of management arrangements, as soon as is practicable within the GSDS process, with a view to making necessary adjustments to both content as well as mechanisms for institutional coordination contained within the plan.

Given the significant roles to be played by multiple institutions under the NFPS and NFP, it is proposed that **the Ministry of Natural Resources and, as appropriate, the Ministry of the Presidency, play lead roles in facilitating discussions on implementation arrangements.** In particular, these Ministries will need to work with their subject agencies to establish and manage coordination mechanisms that support performance-based planning, strategic plans and work programming for the long-term implementation of the NFPS and NFP.

The National Forest Policy and Plan has been developed within the framework of the Constitution of Guyana and with regard to relevant international commitments on the environment, particularly as they relate to forests and biodiversity.

Implementation of this Policy and Plan will be undertaken by the GFC. In the performance of this role and in keeping with the Forests Act (2009), the GFC will coordinate the contributions of other entities including inter alia, Ministries and other State agencies/institutions, citizens and designated beneficiaries, the

private sector, civil society organizations, and international partners.

The Board of the GFC, which will be responsible for oversight of the implementation of the Plan and associated programmes, will ensure compliance with agreed national and global ecological standards and safeguards. The GFC will take into account all methodologies that would promote predictable, efficient, and timely outcomes. The implementation process will, as a priority, identify and collaborate with indigenous and local communities.

Annual progress reports on the implementation of the Policy will be presented to the Parliamentary Subcommittee on Natural Resources for its review and consideration.

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

WHAT IS A NATIONAL FOREST POLICY?

Simply put, a national forest policy is a shared vision for a country's forests and their use, both now and in the future. It outlines the goals, objectives and strategies for achieving this vision, while being flexible enough to adapt to emerging issues. A national forest policy should be developed through a consultative process with a wide range of interests and stakeholders, while being aligned with national priorities and development strategies. Guyana's National Forest Policy covers the period 2018 to 2028, and will be reviewed in 2023 at the halfway stage.

WHAT IS A NATIONAL FOREST PLAN?

A national forest plan can be thought of as a work programme for the implementation of the national forest policy. The plan contains detailed and logically ordered programmes, activities, expected outcomes and indicators. The plan also identifies the roles and responsibilities for various stakeholders, and establishes a solid base from which to monitor and evaluate implementation. Stakeholder inputs, including government agencies, private sector, community and Indigenous Peoples, were key to identifying actions under the plan.

WHY IS A FOREST POLICY IMPORTANT FOR GUYANA?

This Policy reflects Guyana's movement away from valuing of forests for simply their wood and trees, and instead treats forests as part of our national patrimony, to be managed collectively. Forests cover approximately 87 percent (18,483,000 hectares) of Guyana's total surface area. The country's economic development and prosperity is therefore directly tied to the management and use of its forests and forested lands. Aside from the timber industry, Guyana's forests are key to tourism development, biodiversity conservation, wildlife management, bio-prospecting, soil fertility and nutrient cycling, and other ecosystem services (water provisioning, carbon sequestration, etc.).

Of the forestland, 12,249,000 hectares have been designated as State Forests and placed under the management of the Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) - 4,792,420 hectares (37.25%) of this land has

been allocated to the forest industry for timber extraction e.g. State Forest Authorisations-Timber Sales Agreements (SFA-TSA) with large companies, and SFA-Community Forestry Management Agreements (SFA-CFMA) for small producers. Another 751,217 hectares have been designated as protected and research areas e.g. Forest Reserves, Kaieteur, Iwokrama, Kanuku Mountains, and Shell beach. Another ninety-six (mostly forested) areas, consisting of 3,077,000 hectares have been conveyed as Amerindian Titled Lands, the largest private landownership in Guyana.

Guyana's National Forest Policy (NFP) will guide the administration and management of forested areas on State Lands, which includes the State Forests as well as the inland waterways, protected areas, and research areas. It does not apply to private property and Amerindian Titled Lands. However, the Policy can accommodate the participation of indigenous communities, once options are developed to facilitate the genuine participation of Amerindian Titled Lands.

WHY DOES GUYANA NEED A REVISED POLICY?

Guyana has made steady progress in the sustainable management and use of its forests (see Appendix 1) and, more recently, has been leading international efforts to more accurately value forests beyond simply their timber potential. Following the formulation of the last policy in 2011 (see Appendix 2), a number of significant changes have occurred with relevance to the sector. The 2011 revision of the National Forest Policy Statement (NFPS) and the NFP came in response to the Cooperative Republic of Guyana's (CRG) promulgation of its Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) which established that Guyana would maintain its forest cover in order to offer climate services to the global community. The LCDS was being used to garner payments from the international community in return for the ecosystem services the country provided. The first Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the CRG and the Kingdom of Norway in 2009. Financial support for Guyana was linked to its success in limiting greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and establishing institutions and practices to implement a REDD-plus Governance Development Plan (RGDP). This included the development of a Monitoring, Reporting and Verification System (MRVS) to provide a performance measurement framework for the REDD+ financing mechanism.

The CRG, in recognizing the need for a holistic approach to the sustainable management of the country's forests, released the Green State Development Strategy (GSDS) framework in 2016. The Strategy envisions *"A green, inclusive and prosperous Guyana that provides a good life for all its citizens based on a sound education and social protection, low-carbon resilient development, green and decent jobs, economic opportunities, individual equality and political empowerment. Guyana serves as a model of sustainable development and environmental security worldwide, demonstrating the transition to a decarbonised and resource efficient economy that integrates the multi-ethnicity of our country and enhances quality of life for all Guyanese"*.

The proposed goal for Guyana's natural resources (which includes 87% of the land covered in forests) is "stewardship of our natural patrimony" by sustainable management of the nation's (biodiversity) patrimony, allowing for efficient use of resources in a net carbon sequestering and climate resilient forest - through social cohesion, inclusion, good governance, decentralization, and participatory processes - sustainably financed to ensure the wellbeing, education and good life for current and future generations of Guyanese. This is the overarching development policy under which the revised NFPS will be implemented.

HOW IS THE FOREST SECTOR CURRENTLY MANAGED IN GUYANA?

Guyana's forest sector has been guided since 2011 by the previous National Forest Policy and Plan. The Policy is linked to a number of associated laws and agencies involved in the conservation and management of Guyana's forest resources (Appendix 3). The GFC, established by the GFC Act of 1973, is responsible for the management and regulation of Guyana's forests on State Lands (Forest Act, 2009) and overseeing the implementation of key technical aspects of international agreements such as Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+) climate change activities in Guyana.

The GFC's main responsibilities are: policy implementation, sustainable forest management including conservation operations for purposes of carbon sequestration and environmental services, community forestry and planning the effective utilization of Guyana's State Forest Resources. The

GFC is also responsible for enforcement of forest laws and regulations, monitoring and control of social and environmental impacts of operations within the State Forest Estate, collection of revenues from forestry activities and implementation of the national Monitoring Reporting and Verification System for country level land-use and forest change monitoring. The GFC works with private and Amerindian Village lands management structure (e.g. Ministry of Indigenous Peoples Affairs, Village Councils) to provide technical assistance for sustainable forest management activities.

Box 1 – Forests and Guyana's Constitution

Chapter II – Principles and Bases of the Political, Economic and Social System in Guyana's Constitution contains three articles specifically addressed in the National Forest Policy Statement:

(4) National economic planning shall be the basic principle of the development and management of the economy. It shall provide for the widest possible participation of the people and their socio-economic organs at enterprise, community, regional and national levels, and shall also provide continuous opportunity for the working people to exercise initiative and to develop a spirit of creativity and innovation.

(13) The principle objective of the political system of the State is to extend socialist democracy by providing increasing opportunities for the participation of citizens in the management and decision-making processes of the State.

(36) In the interests of the present and future generations, the State will protect and make rational use of its land, mineral and water resources, as well as its fauna and flora, and will take all appropriate measures to conserve and improve the environment.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL FOREST POLICY?

The GFC, with its mandate to ensure that Guyana's forest resources are sustainably managed and conserved, has been tasked with the responsibility of developing the National Forest Policy. The GFC will also play a lead role in implementing much of the National Forest Policy and Plan, particularly as relates to the deriving of economic benefits from the forests through timber extraction.

A forest policy that goes beyond the timber industry can only be effectively implemented by multiple actors, across different sectors and institutional scales. There are over ten state agencies and institutions with mandates that relate to forests in some form. Indigenous communities across Guyana collectively represent the largest private owners of the country's forests, and are responsible for their management and sustainability. Add to that a significant number of local and regional governments, communities, international and local NGOs, as well as a range of local and international private sector

players with interests in Guyana's forests.

The GFC will have primary responsibility for the implementation of the NFPS, while the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) is in the best position to facilitate the integration of the Policy and Plan into the wider natural resources sector and other Government agencies. The MNR will provide oversight, assist in establishing the necessary coordinating mechanisms (including other Ministries and agencies), and ensure that the policy is monitored and evaluated on a regular basis. Specifically, the MNR will work with its subject agencies to ensure that any internal policies (Strategic Plans, Budgetary Commitments, Work Programmes, etc.) are aligned with the NFPS.

WHAT ARE SOME KEY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES ADDRESSED IN THE FOREST POLICY?

Economic Issues

A number of previous reports, studies and missions have highlighted that the problems and challenges with Guyana's forest industry lie both in the supply side and the demand side. Supply issues highlighted include:

- problems with delivery of reliable, quality product;
- high levels of waste – with sawmills recovering 40-45%, and chainsaw operators just 30-35%;
- lack of access to affordable capital in order to invest in new equipment and technology;
- high transportation costs due to difficulties with the internal road network and limited harbour facilities; and
- high energy costs that have run-on effects on processing.

Many of these issues cannot be resolved without the involvement and commitment of CRG Ministries (Business, Infrastructure, Finance) and public agencies (GGMC, GLSC, EPA, etc.), along with an engaged private sector that go beyond the forestry sector.

Demand-related issues include:

- the need to promote wood locally as a suitable, low-carbon, building material
- the need to improve regulations in the country, such as the Building Code, to help promote and standardize quality and dimensions of wood for the construction industry
- the need to promote lesser-used species both domestically and internationally
- the requirement for improved marketing of Guyana's forest products.

Addressing these issues requires action at many levels, from government promotion of the industry, to support from international organisations (e.g. ITTO), and greater industry collaboration.

There are similar problems in the harvesting, processing and marketing of non-timber forest products and in the establishment and marketing of forest-based tourism. A major limiting factor in all of these economic activities is the paucity of skilled human capital and the limited availability of appropriate research, training, and human capacity development for the wood industries, non-timber production and processing, and hospitality management. Planning and coordination at the local, regional and national level could address many of these problems.

Ecological Issues

Although still among the most forested countries in the world, Guyana continues to face the challenges posed by deforestation, land degradation and watershed siltation. These threats, and their associated impacts on biodiversity, are among the biggest environmental issues facing Guyana and its forests. These threats primarily stem from activities outside of the Forestry sector, but have direct impacts on the health of the forest and its ability to provide goods and services to the Guyanese people. As such, any effort to address these issues will require multi-agency planning, collaboration and joint monitoring across Guyana's extractive sectors.

Key to this cross-sector collaboration will be comprehensive and up-to-date information on the health of the forest and nature of the threats facing it. GFC already collects a great deal of data (pre- and post-harvest inventory, log-tracking data, geo-referenced trees, stumps and satellite/aerial images, sawmill output, and timber shipping documents). Gathering additional data on impacts of the wider extractive sector would be key to the required broadening of this knowledge base and better decision-making on land management at the national level. Expanded analyses of existing and new data is critical to better assess the range of ecological impacts (e.g. species depletion or loss) stemming from forest use and management practices.

Guyana's forests, and the ecological threats they face, span a variety of tenure arrangements and fall under multiple Agency mandates. As such, there is need for a systematic approach to spatial planning and decision-making that go beyond discussions around timber, along with an improved understanding of Guyana's forest biodiversity and its spatial dynamics. This information is needed to inform both preventative and restorative measures aimed to improve the health and sustainability of the country's forests. Objective and scientifically grounded approaches are needed at the national level to identify and conserve high diversity forests, threatened hotspots, rare habitats and vulnerable ecosystems (including areas at risk from climate change). Addressing Guyana's lost or degraded forests will also require an expanded, country-specific data set on reclamation, reforestation (both natural and human assisted); agroforestry; and afforestation in abandoned agricultural lands and urban areas. Opportunities exist to link these preventative and restorative interventions to payment/offset systems, environmental performance standards and incentive schemes.

Social and Governance Issues

Guyana's forests remain the primary source of livelihoods for Guyana's indigenous and forest-dependent communities, and are central to the country macro-economic development. However, as previously mentioned, Guyana's forested land is governed by a variety of overlapping and sometimes conflicting laws and institutional mandates. Individually, these institutions are attempting to address many of these issues, but are often ill equipped to cope with the multi-sector, cross-scale nature of these threats. Sustainable solutions to these higher-level, cross-cutting issues will require workable mechanisms for genuine inter-agency, cross-sector planning and collaboration. Although this has long been identified as a key step to improving forest and environmental governance in Guyana, progress has been slow. Integrating and streamlining the work of long-established, distinct agencies at a national level is a significant challenge,

irrespective of country, and requires significant institutional restructuring and legislative alignment. However, as time passes, these issues only grow in scope and complexity, and become more difficult to effectively address. As such, national efforts at integrating land-use planning, management and resource allocation should be promoted, and realistic strategies developed for formal and effective collaboration between Government agencies.

Efforts to address forest governance issues in Guyana have traditionally focused on GFC and its regulatory performance, with less emphasis on the wider enabling environment, such as taxation and the role of the private sector. This traditional focus has also resulted in a general emphasis on traditional forests products (i.e. logs), with limited (but growing) prospects for economically attractive value-added operations. The Government and the private sector share the responsibility for the re-tooling and modernizing of forestry operations for value-added production and marketing. National, scale-appropriate interventions are needed to promote the sector, such as a business friendly taxation regime that supports sustainable forest-based industries/businesses. A supportive tax regime, in combination with the development of sector-wide standards, is needed for the development of performance-based incentive measures. Fiscal incentives, and increased emphasis on self-regulation and sectoral growth, is key to moving the forests towards economic and ecological sustainability, but requires national tax reform and more accountability in the private sector.

Although GFC and the Government have engaged in significant stakeholder engagement, there continues to be a disconnect between many Guyanese and issues surrounding our forests. Even stakeholders within the sector often claim a limited understanding of policies, decision-making processes, and institutional operations. The capacity of stakeholders to engage meaningfully in processes that concern their interests is linked directly to their levels of awareness and ability to effectively contribute to these processes. Stakeholder empowerment and engagement is therefore a key issue to be addressed, as increased stakeholder capacity will improve both institutional performance and the functioning of the sector.

WHAT ARE THE PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE THE POLICY?

The Policy will be guided by six overarching principles of sustainable development, as outlined below¹

1. **Balanced decision-making** - decision-making processes should effectively integrate both long-term and short-term economic, environmental, social and equitable considerations;
2. **The precautionary principle** - if there are threats of serious or irreversible loss of biodiversity, or serious or irreversible harm to habitats or ecosystems, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent such loss or harm;
3. **Inter-generational equity** - the present generation should ensure that the health, diversity and productivity of the environment is maintained or enhanced for the benefit of future generations;
4. **Protection of the natural capital base** - the conservation of biological diversity and the maintenance of ecological integrity should be a fundamental consideration in decision-making;
5. **Policy intervention to correct market failure** - the market failures that are leading to

¹ In-line with the Protected Areas Act 2011

environmental degradation and the reduction in natural capital should be corrected by policy interventions including the development and application of improved valuation and pricing mechanisms for ecosystem services;

6. **Local benefit** - local people, particularly in indigenous and forest-dependent communities, should be provided with training and education relevant to job placement opportunities in the nation's forest.

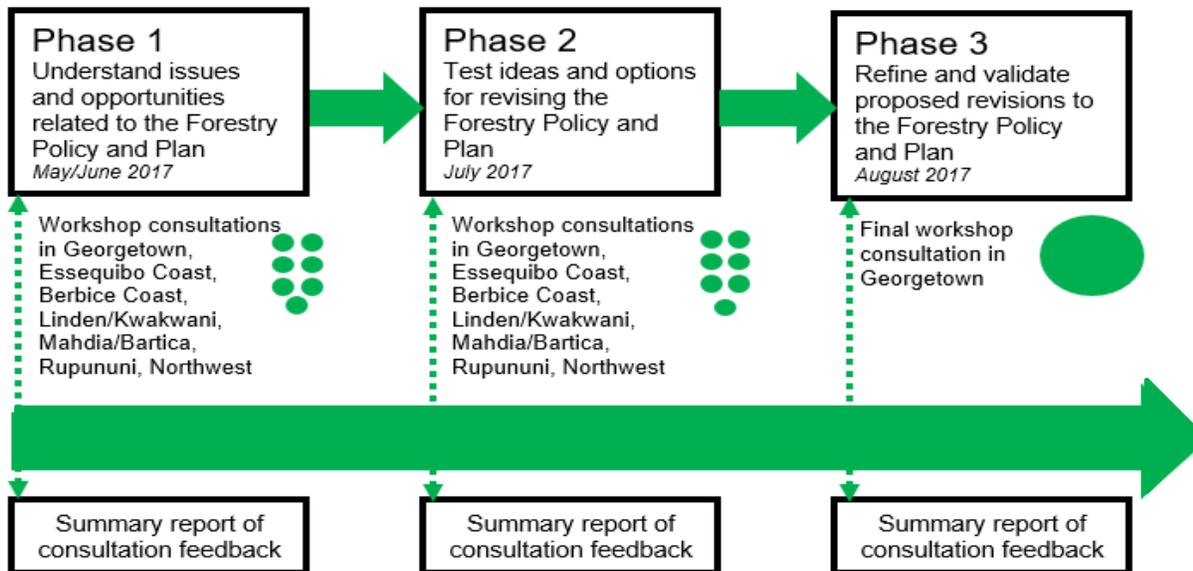
The policy will also be guided by policies specific to forest management, including:

- **Sustainable Forest Management** – Forests should be managed to provide sustainable social, economic and environmental goods and services, while maintaining the ecological integrity of the forest and watersheds, for both current and future generations;
- **Stakeholder involvement and partnership** - Multi-stakeholder interests in forests and biodiversity should be recognised, and collaborative resource management encouraged among communities, government and other stakeholders;
- **Planning and management** - Multi-sectoral approaches should be used in all planning and management of forest and biodiversity;
- **National accounting** – All efforts should be made to capture the contribution of the forest in national development, thereby integrating forest and biodiversity issues into national development policies and programmes;
- **Research and informed decision-making** – Management decisions should be based on the best available forest science and information. Where practical, traditional and scientific knowledge should be integrated to promote sustainable forest management;
- **Agroforestry** - Increased forest and tree cover should be promoted through natural regeneration and reforestation;
- **International obligations** – All relevant international agreement and conventions should be mainstreamed into planning and management in the forestry and eco-tourism sectors;
- **Decentralization** - Forest governance and administrative functions should be decentralized as much as is practicable;
- **Public-Private Partnerships** - Public-private sector partnerships and investment in forestry, eco-tourism sectors and forest-based sectors should be promoted;
- **Capacity-building** – Training and capacity development for stakeholders in the forestry, eco-tourism sectors and forest-based sectors should be promoted;
- **Gender** - Gender and vulnerability issues should be mainstreamed in forestry and eco-tourism development planning and management;
- **Transboundary Cooperation** - Transboundary, regional and international cooperation in forestry and biodiversity management should be promoted;
- **Good governance** – All efforts should be made to continuously promote good governance in forestry and forest-based sectors;
- **Sustainable financing** – All efforts should be made to secure appropriate and sustainable funding for

the forestry and eco-tourism sectors.

HOW WAS THE POLICY AND PLAN DEVELOPED?

The National Forest Policy and Forest Plan were developed through extensive multi-stakeholder consultations. A variety of data collection tools and feedback channels were used, with meetings and workshops being conducted across Guyana. Stakeholder engagements took place in three phases, as illustrated in the figure below.



In summary, two rounds of structured stakeholder engagements were held. With the support of GFC and other entities, stakeholders were identified, invited and efforts made to share key information needed for effective participation before engagements were held. Participatory and transparent methods of capturing conclusions, particularly the recommendations, were used, and findings shared immediately or shortly afterwards with participants. Anonymous questionnaires were used to elicit further information from participants as well as nearby citizens. A total of 245 and 107 questionnaires were completed during the first and second rounds respectively.

The reports from each individual engagement were compiled into two summary reports, one for each round. Questionnaire findings were also integrated into these reports, which provided the raw material for identifying and articulating the contents of this revised National Forest Policy Statement and its integrated National Forest Plan. Stakeholders were finally engaged at a validation workshop to discuss the proposed NFPS on August 24, 2017.

The first engagement, during Phase I, elicited inputs from stakeholders on four key questions;

- What is working with the current NFPS/NFP?
- What are new and emerging issues?

- What is not working?
- What are your recommendations for addressing these?

During this first round, May 17 to June 15, 2017, eight engagements were held in Georgetown, Port Kaituma, Charity, Tain, New Amsterdam, Mahdia, Lethem and Linden. Stakeholders from nearby locations (such as Ituni, Kwakwani, Rockstone, Annai etc.) were included in these engagements, which used a cluster approach. A total of 173 stakeholders participated in round one.

For the second round of engagements, held during Phase II over the period July 19 to August 7, 2017, stakeholders were asked for detailed recommendations on how the forest plan should be constructed. The proposed areas of focus, based on analysis of the outputs from round 1, were shared and discussed. Stakeholders were asked to identify activities, lead and support agencies, and indicators of success for those actions they felt would address the proposed focus areas. Feedback from these engagements, which were attended by 174 participants at 11 locations (Georgetown, Port Kaituma, Mabaruma, Charity, Supenaam, Corriverton, New Amsterdam, Bartica, Mabura, Mahdia and Linden), informed the design of the National Forest Plan in particular.

In addition to the vital ingredient of stakeholder engagement, the NFPS review process benefited from thematic expertise in the fields of forest natural resource management, forestry, social science, economics, governance, and stakeholder engagement. Through the use of this technical resource, the NFPS review process benefitted from desk reviews, sectoral analyses and international good practices. Using this foundation, the thematic experts reviewed the outputs from stakeholder engagements to produce the eventual structure and content of this NFPS and its integrated Plan.

SECTION 2: POLICY PROVISIONS

This policy has an overall objective and four specific objectives. Each of the specific objectives has accompanying strategies which are the bases for planning activities in support of the Policy (Figure 1).

The Policy's **overall objective** is:

The conservation, protection, and utilization of the state's forest, by ensuring its social, economic, and environmental attributes and benefits are sustained and enhanced for the benefit of current and future generations of Guyanese, whilst fulfilling Guyana's commitments under international agreements and conventions.

ECONOMIC

Specific Objective 1: Deriving Economic Benefits from the Forest

This objective promotes modern forest-based enterprises, including those that go beyond traditional timber extraction, and covers a broad range of forest-based products and services. Under this objective, emphasis will be placed on promoting sustainable livelihoods, both nationally and in forest dependent communities. The objective stresses the need for equitable benefit sharing not just among current stakeholders, but also between present and future generations.

CONSERVATION

Specific Objective 2: Conserving, Protecting and Sustaining the Forest

This objective recognises that Guyana's future is closely tied to its forests, and that the country benefits when our forests thrive. This objective outlines strategies to both avoid lasting damage to our forests ecosystems, and reverse existing negative impacts. Forests are valued for more than just wood and trees, with emphasis placed on maintaining the health of watersheds, aquatic systems, wildlife, biodiversity and culturally important sites.

GOVERNANCE

Specific Objective 3: Governing the Forest

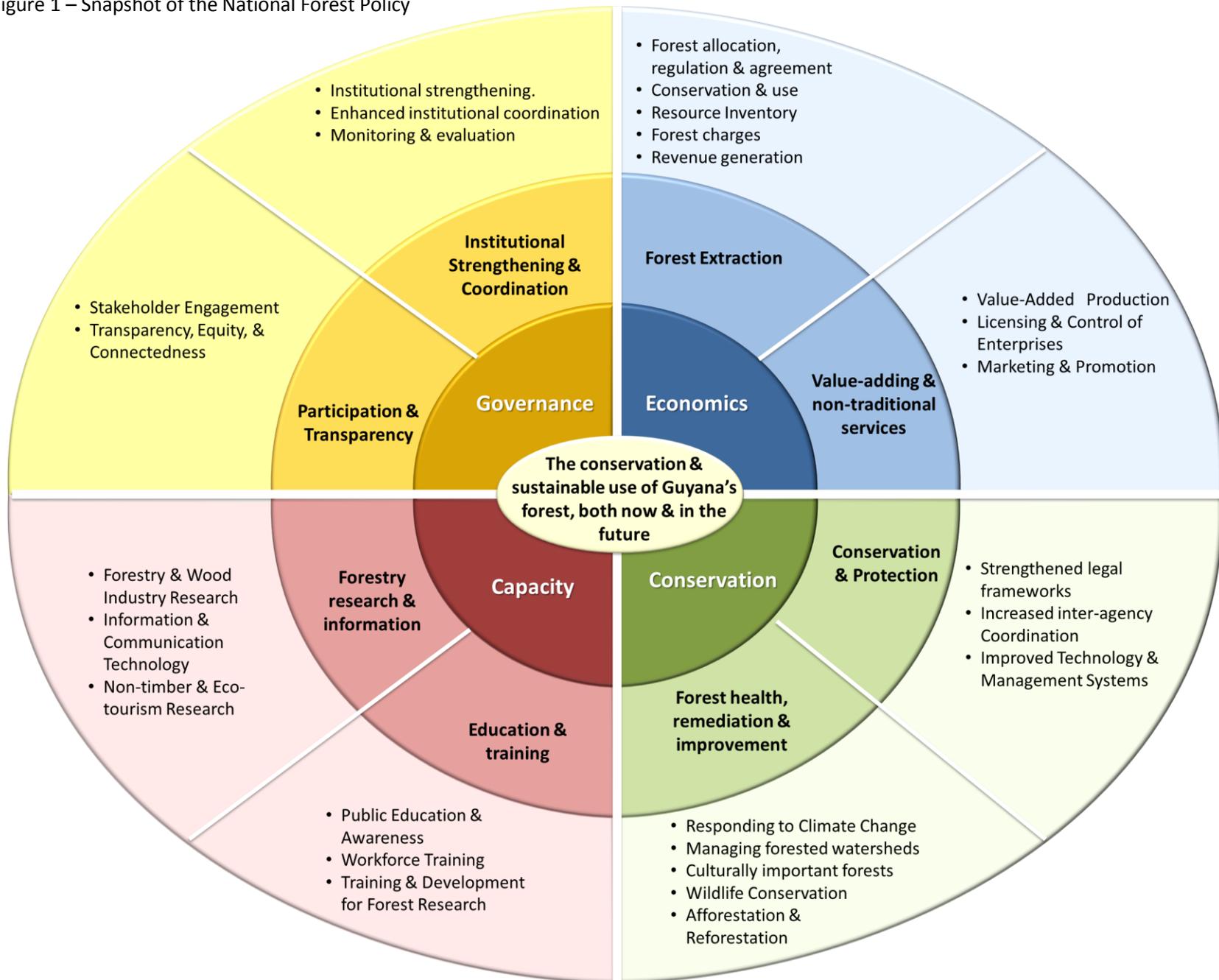
This objective emphasizes mechanisms for improved efficiency, efficacy, equity, transparency, financial prudence, and stakeholders' participation in the management of our forests. Appropriate governance mechanisms must be established at the local, regional, and national levels, and monitored for performance and continuous improvement.

CAPACITY

Specific Objective 1: Building Capacity for effective Forest Management

The policy promotes the generation and application of knowledge, technology and capacity building for effective forest management in Guyana. It requires research, training, application of learning, technological development, information management and education. The dissemination of this knowledge and information must be done using the appropriate language, communication tools and messages, and be tailored to different audiences, at their appropriate (kindergarten to post-graduate) levels of education.

Figure 1 – Snapshot of the National Forest Policy



SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 1 - ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS: DERIVING DEVELOPMENTAL BENEFITS FROM THE FOREST

This objective promotes the establishment and efficient functioning of modern forest based enterprises, including those that go beyond traditional timber extraction. These enterprises should contribute to the wellbeing of indigenous and forest-dependent communities, regional economies, and the national economy, while sustaining the forest. The extraction and use of forest resources in Guyana will be guided by the following principles:

- (a) Timber harvesting and related infrastructural development in forest concessions must be coordinated and regulated in accordance with prescribed Forest Management Plans. This is in order to ensure sustainable levels of log extraction that are consistent with maintaining ecological integrity.
- (b) Extraction of forest-based materials must be based on the inherent capability of the forest ecosystem and its rate of regeneration. Relevant ecological principles shall be applied in the demarcation of different Forest Classes, e.g., the conservation status of species and their habitats; the area required to sustain a given system; and the scale and intensity of forest management. The Code of Practice for Timber Harvesting will guide forest management and shall be applied and adhered to by all forest users.
- (c) Large-scale concessionaires are required to set aside at least 4.5% of their concession as a biodiversity reserve which typifies the ecosystems/forest types of the concession. Selection of these reserves will be guided by the 2011 Protected Areas Act and submitted to the PAC for consideration as Protected Areas.
- (d) Chainsaw and portable mills operators shall be trained and certified in skills for greater efficiency and reduced ecological impact during felling, harvesting and lumbering. Chainsaw operators must maintain and upgrade their licenses before operating in the State forest for which they are authorized. Similarly, those producing chainsaw lumber must be so registered and licensed.
- (e) Management or Operational Plans shall be required for the harvesting of non-timber resources of the forest, before a licence or permit is issued. The Code of Practice for Non-Timber Forest Product extraction will guide forest management, and shall be applied and adhered to by all forest users.

POLICY GOAL 1.1: FOREST EXTRACTION

This goal calls for legislation to strengthen transparent processes in the allocation of timber and other natural resources, and the continuous auditing of operations. This is in order to ensure compliance with forest and environmental management standards, increase the delivery of goods and services at higher commodity prices, and ultimately contribute to the growth of Guyana's GDP. Initiatives to continuously strengthen forest allocation and management, such as the EU-FLEGT process, will be pursued under this policy goal.

Policy Strategy 1.1.1 Forest Allocation Regulation and Agreement

This strategy requires continuously surveying and inventorying all potential timber production areas, and constituting them into forest management units. These units shall be managed through forest management plans, with active involvement of the local stakeholders. It also calls for

developing the capacities of decentralized local institutions in the sustainable management of timber and non-timber forest resources. Wherever possible, efforts will be made to define property rights (e.g. land and tree tenure rights, intellectual property rights) in all kinds of forests and ownership systems. This is key to ensuring equitable benefit sharing in the allocation and use of Forest resources. Performance standards will be reviewed and expanded for the sector (both Government and non-government stakeholders), and cover the use and extraction of both timber and non-timber goods and services. These standards will be used to craft a modern and progressive forestry sector during the life of the Policy, and may include measures of quality (e.g., export standards), efficiency (e.g. recovery rates), production level (e.g. annual production and export volumes), and accreditation standards (e.g. ISO, EU-FLEGT), to name a few.

Policy Strategy 1.1.2 Conservation and Use of Forest Resources

With the policy being grounded in the principle of sustainable development, Guyana's forest resources shall be managed to optimize their social, economic and environmental benefits. All efforts shall be made to conserve biological diversity, water resources, soils, unique and fragile ecosystems, and all associated values. These efforts shall be based on targeted research and relevant data, taking into consideration biodiversity research requirements and intellectual property rights. The performance standards developed for the sector will also include indicators of environmental performance, particularly accreditation/certification standards.

Policy Strategy 1.1.3 Resource Inventory

The designation of State Forests shall be based on periodic comprehensive reviews of the land use policy, taking into account all the uses and services provided by forest resources. These reviews will include inventories of State Forests and individual concessions, which shall be used to determine resource allocation and management planning.

Policy Strategy 1.1.4 Forest Charges

The GFC shall formulate, and periodically revise, an economic rationale for forest revenue systems, including consideration of carbon credits to offset deforestation and degradation. This will be paired with a framework for equitably apportioning, recovering and distributing royalties and carbon offset payments among stakeholders. The GFC shall also implement the forest charges system (see Forest Act), including fee structures and a process for their periodic review.

Policy Strategy 1.1.5 Revenue Generation

Efforts will be made to generate revenue from a fees structure relevant in both the domestic and exports markets. Measures will include a comprehensive review of incentives and disincentives in the sub-sector, including taxation, fee structures and revenue generation. Options for linking these incentive measures to performance-based indicators (see Strategies 1.1.1 and 1.1.2) will be examined, and implemented where appropriate, such as concessionaires who achieve their Annual Allowable Cut or meet graduated production declarations.

POLICY GOAL 1.2: PROMOTE VALUE-ADDED PRODUCTS AND NON-TIMBER GOODS AND SERVICES FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The fundamental strategy under this goal shall be the promotion of sustainable and economically viable forest-based industries. The number and types of industries established shall be consistent with the extraction potential. At the level of indigenous and forest-dependent communities, this goal also fosters improved livelihoods based on local value-added and non-timber goods and services. The following priority areas shall be developed as under this goal:

- production efficiency and productivity,
- enhanced recovery rates through improved processing techniques,
- down-stream industry development
- increased variety of value-added products
- improved market access and higher output and revenue levels

Policy Strategy 1.2.1 Enabling Value-Added Production

The strategy will facilitate value-adding through marketing, technological improvements, and improved processing. These measures are necessary to increase competitiveness and meet domestic and international standards. Foreign investments will be encouraged under greater scrutiny, with a clear preference for more capital intensive, higher technology projects. Investments in added-value product development and promotion shall be encouraged, with more emphasis on improved efficiency and links to overseas marketing networks. The size, scope and scale of the forest industry sub-sector shall be related to the availability of timber and non-timber forest resources from sustainably managed forests.

Policy Strategy 1.2.2 Licensing and Control of Forest-Based Enterprises

This strategy calls for the review and revision of sector-wide policies (Log Export, Timber Grading rules) to ensure that they promote sustainable forestry and allow for transitioning to more value-added/NTFPs

Policy Strategy 1.2.3 Marketing and Promotion

This strategy will focus on the development of a financially viable local market for Guyana's timber and timber products, with emphasis being placed on lesser-used species. This will be paired with product development and enhanced market intelligence for stakeholders and investors.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 2 - CONSERVING AND PROTECTING THE FOREST

This objective recognises that Guyana's future is closely tied to its forests, and that the country benefits when our forests thrive. The policy outlines strategies to both avoid lasting damage to our forests ecosystems, and reverse existing negative impacts. Forests are valued for more than just their trees, with emphasis placed on maintaining the health of watersheds, aquatic systems, wildlife, biodiversity and culturally important sites. Environmental performance standards will be reviewed and expanded for the sector, and cover the use and extraction of both timber and non-timber goods and services, eventually allowing for the introduction of environmental auditing. The following policy goals and strategies will be pursued to ensure sustainable forest management.

POLICY GOAL 2.1: MEASURES FOR FOREST PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION

The policy is grounded in the conservation and protection of Guyana's unique and/or vulnerable biodiversity and ecosystems, in line with national policies and international commitments.

Policy Strategy 2.1.1 Strengthening the wider legal framework

This strategy calls for the legal provisions that govern Protected Areas and biodiversity conservation to be aligned with the revised Forest Act and reforms within the GFC (under EU FLEGT). This strategy also calls for the integration of forest, protected area, wildlife and biodiversity laws into judicial and law-enforcement training programmes. One priority area is finalizing all ongoing legal processes for the establishment of proposed forest reserve areas.

Policy Strategy 2.1.2 Increasing coordination among natural resource agencies

Through MNR, develop institutional provisions for increased and effective interagency collaboration. These provisions will include processes for identify and resolving conflicts, particularly as they relate to land-degradation, reclamation and reforestation.

Other areas of improved coordination include forest use allocation, efficient utilization of forest products and services, and monitoring and enforcement activities. This strategy proposes multiple approaches, such as the soon to be developed REDD+ Grievance and Redress Mechanism, and wherever possible, pursue integrated land-use planning as a tool for managing the Forest Estate. These approaches will be tailored to address specific areas of conflict.

Policy Strategy 2.1.3 Improving technical tools and systems for sustaining the forest

This will see the creation of a database/corrective action registry that facilitates forest monitoring and reporting that is spatially explicit and temporally sensitive. Focus will be placed on investing in new, and existing, research and technology that inform forest management guidelines and forest utilization efficiency. Options for the formal integration of traditional ecological knowledge in forest management will also be pursued, where appropriate. Strengthening of systems for tracking the extraction of forest products will be pursued in order to ensure the legality of these products. New tracking systems will also be developed for non-wood products and services (e.g., medicinal plants, craft materials, etc.).

POLICY GOAL 2.2: PREVENTATIVE AND RESTORATIVE MEASURES FOR BETTER FOREST HEALTH

This goal focuses on managing and enhancing the ecological integrity of Guyana's forest, through preventative and restorative measures. Efforts will be made to understand, prevent, and recover from climate change and other hazards. Priority will be given to issues around climate change as a growing threat to local livelihoods and Guyana's macro-economic and social development.

Specifically, climate change and human activities will exponentially increase incidences of wildfires and biodiversity loss in the nation's forests. Guyana's biologically unique savannah woodland (including "bush islands") and forested wetland ecosystems are particularly vulnerable to fires and deforestation. These and other vulnerable habitats will be managed for the conservation of biodiversity, soil fertility, water resources, and cultural value.

Policy Strategy 2.2.1 Responding to Climate Change

Guyana will pursue appropriate bilateral and multilateral compensation mechanisms for ecosystem services (e.g. REDD+). Efforts will also focus on increasing national awareness about the role of forests in climate change mitigation and adaptation. Emphasis will be placed on mitigating deforestation and forest degradation, protecting vulnerable forest types (e.g., savannah woodland, forested wetlands, etc.), managing the increasing threat of wildfires, and increased earnings from environmental services schemes. This strategy also calls for the development of a Disaster Management Plan to address impacts of climate change.

Policy Strategy 2.2.2 Management of Forested Watersheds

Guyana's forests are intricately linked to the health and functioning of the county's watersheds. The provision of water resources by Guyana's, mostly forested, watersheds is also an environmental service that should be valued and incorporated into national/international accounting schemes. Threats to these watersheds, driven by the misuse of forested lands, are among the most serious environmental issues facing Guyana and its forests.

A comprehensive approach to watershed management in Guyana's, which goes beyond codes of practice, is required to safeguard these service and the forests that provide them, encourage eco-tourism and other forms of non-timber value-added services, and, vitally, assure the preservation of Indigenous lifestyles. National conservation strategies will be developed for critical watersheds and forested wetland ecosystems and, through partnerships with the MNR and other Government agencies, incorporated into ongoing integrated land-use planning efforts.

Policy Strategy 2.2.3 Identification and management of culturally important forests

Multiple sites of cultural or religious value have already been identified in Guyana's Forests, with many additional areas still to be identified in actively logged areas. Although these sites tend to be relatively small in area, they should be considered in land-using planning and decision-making.

The Policy calls for "sacred trees/forests" (term used in the COP for TSAs and WCLs) to be defined, identified and managed, where possible. These efforts will be pursued both nationally and at the TSA/WCL level. Options for protection will also be pursued in partnership with other Agencies, such

as Natural Monuments under the PAC or gazetted National Monuments under the National Trust.

Policy Strategy 2.2.4 Conservation and Protection of Wildlife

There is significant overlap in the scope of Guyana's wildlife and forest policies, given the vast extent of the forest. Therefore, wildlife issues in most instances are forestry issues. Of greatest relevance is the impact of forest-based activities on wildlife population. This policy recognizes this and is guided by the recent laws and regulation established under the Wildlife Conservation and Management Act.

Policy Strategy 2.2.5 Afforestation² and Reforestation

The policy promotes the rehabilitation and restoration of degraded landscapes through forest plantation development, enrichment planting, and community forestry. The strategy is to develop systems, and incentive packages, to support reforestation and forest plantation development. Public, private sector and community investment shall be sought, with emphasis on degraded forests, agricultural and mining lands and mangroves. This will require developing and implementing a National Forest Plantation Strategy, based on best practices and updated forest plantation information.

² This is defined in this policy as planting of new forests on lands which, historically, have not contained forests or in an area where the preceding vegetation was not forest within recent historical time. Source: The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)
http://www.ipcc.ch/ipccreports/sres/land_use/index.php?idp=47

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 3 - GOVERNING THE FOREST TO ENSURE CURRENT AND FUTURE BENEFITS

This policy promotes and requires mechanisms, for efficiency, efficacy, equity, transparency, financial prudence, and stakeholders' participation in governance of the forest at the local, regional, and national levels, to ensure current and future benefits for Guyanese. All administrative arrangements for the development of the forestry sector in Guyana will be aimed at servicing and supporting the sustainable management of the country's forest. The GFC, guided by the principles set by the National Forest Policy and relevant legislation, will work closely with relevant agencies and national committees to ensure increased institutional transparency, consistency, and credibility. This is required to foster responsiveness, accountability and the rule of law in forest management.

The GFC shall work in concert with all international conventions and agreements to which the CRG is signatory and be guided by the Government of Guyana's Strategic Plan. The Commission shall continue to engage and interact with the Forest Products Association (FPA) which represents the interests of a number of members engaged in business activities in the forest sector. Similarly, the GFC shall engage and support other organisations such as small loggers' associations which are increasing in number, and represent small operators from mainly forest-dependent, low income communities.

POLICY GOAL 3.1: INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING AND COORDINATION

This goal calls for continuous institutional strengthening, quality improvement, coordination and capacity-building for equity, efficiency and effectiveness.

Policy Strategy 3.1.1 Continuous institutional strengthening and improvement

This strategy focuses on the continuous institutional improvement of the GFC and associated Agencies for optimal performance. The GFC and the Forest Act have benefitted from recent reviews and reform processes (e.g., FLEGT), which should be the basis for continuous review and improvement of institutional performance.

Through MNR, efforts will also be made to review and, where appropriate, revise the laws and mandates of other key sector agencies (GGMC, GLSC, EPA, PAC, and WCMC), to address overlapping responsibilities and jurisdictions. The performance of these agencies will also be monitored for efficiency and effectiveness, with operational adjustments being made to encourage a better functioning sub-sector.

Policy Strategy 3.1.2 Enhanced institutional coordination

Concrete efforts will be made to align, where appropriate, the operations of key sector agencies, particularly those within the Natural Resources and Environment sectors. In certain areas, joint regional control centers will be established, for coordinating activities and resources. Through MNR's oversight, mechanisms will be installed to integrate strategic and work planning processes across key agencies, and

the maximizing of synergies and collaboration. This includes options for creating an interagency monitoring system, funding baskets to pay for joint activities (e.g. research, M&E, training), and a multi-tiered coordination platform (e.g., Board Chairs – Policy; Heads of Agencies– Administration; working-level – Operations).

In order to achieve an effective level of coordination/integration across sectors, changes are also required within the larger enabling environment. For instance, there is urgent need for an integrated national land-use plan (e.g., zoning where mining can take place, etc.), legislative coherence across the natural resources and environmental sectors (aligned with the Forest Act) and, if necessary in some cases, Presidential Grants or Ministerial Orders directing where activities can and cannot take place.

Policy Strategy 3.1.3 Monitoring and Evaluation

Internal M&E systems across these agencies will be strengthened, and used to better track performance in forest and forest-related enterprises.

POLICY GOAL 3.2: IMPROVING PARTICIPATION & TRANSPARENCY

This goal is aimed at increasing stakeholders' confidence in natural resources agencies by addressing matters regarding corruption or corrupt practices, and demonstrating that the agencies are committed to informing and providing professional service. Strategies will focus on the genuine engagement of stakeholders for better decision-making, and implementing formal mechanisms to ensure transparency and equitable treatment across sectors.

Policy Strategy 3.2.1 Stakeholder Participation

Under this strategy, guidelines will be designed and implemented for stakeholder engagement. These guidelines will govern the way all forest-related agencies approach stakeholder participation. It will apply to key forest-related activities, such as forest allocation, conservation planning processes, of environmental services, etc. Wherever possible, efforts will be made to define property rights (e.g. land and tree tenure rights, intellectual property rights) in all kinds of forests and ownership systems. This is key to ensuring equitable participation and sharing of benefits from the forest.

Policy Strategy 3.2.2 Transparency, Equity, and Connectedness

The policy calls for the development of standards for transparency and public disclosure of non-sensitive information, particularly agency decisions and their rationale. These standards will be tied to the creation of a pragmatic grievance mechanism to address conflict within and across sectors.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 4 - BUILDING HUMAN AND INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY FOR MANAGEMENT

This policy promotes and requires research, training, application of learning, technological development and information storage, management and dissemination to benefit all Guyanese at their appropriate (kindergarten to post-graduate) levels of education and customary (indigenous) languages. A collaborative approach involving consultation, needs assessment, investigation, synthesis and consensus building will be aimed at ensuring equity and the fair distribution of benefits and efficiency in the execution of forest management prescriptions. The uptake and dissemination of information built on indigenous and scientific knowledge will be used to improve on the management of forest and biodiversity. Updating the infrastructure for research, education and training at all levels of management in the forest will entail:

- (a) Promoting sectoral and cross-sectoral institutional collaborations to generate and share information to improve forest policy and management.
- (b) Encouraging institutions of higher learning and corporate bodies to integrate indigenous knowledge, citizen science, and academic studies in forest and biodiversity management.
- (c) Promoting targeted research in forest and biodiversity issues and supporting the publication and dissemination of results to increase awareness.
- (d) Continuously updating forest information database with inputs from monitoring and evaluation of the forest, forest-based industry, and eco-tourism activities.
- (e) Establishing a forest and biodiversity research funds which local agencies, academic institutions, civil society, and indigenous communities can access.
- (f) Creating a mechanism for employment of adequately skilled personnel to ensure SFM
- (g) Building national capacity for accurately accounting and timely collection of resource production and utilization of data to be linked with other macro-economic data at the local, regional and national levels.
- (h) Supporting the development of infrastructure for watershed, eco-tourism and biodiversity research.

POLICY GOAL 4.1 FORESTRY RESEARCH AND INFORMATION

In accordance with the Guyana Forestry Commission Act (2007), the Commission is required to support efforts directed at *“research, collate, analyse, prepare, and disseminate data, statistics, and other information about forests and all aspects of forestry, including forest ecology and the use of forest produce.”* Information and Communication Technology (ICT) continues to be an important part of decision-making processes in forest management across the world. In Guyana, Geographic information systems (GIS) and remote sensing technologies have been similarly embraced becoming an important part of the forest operations sector. Legally, forestry operations are required to draw on spatial analysis tools in planning timber harvesting and this, along with current efforts to keep Guyana on track with Monitoring, Reporting and Verification Systems (MRVS) offers a range of opportunities for the continued inclusion of GIS.

Policy Strategy 4.1.1 Forestry and Wood Industry Research

The GFC will collaborate with other partners including such as UG, Iwokrama, CI- Guyana, WWF, ITTO and FAO to promote appropriate research into all aspects of forestry and forest- related activities. Whenever appropriate, research centred on natural resources shall be undertaken in collaboration with local and overseas agencies. Mechanisms will be established to strengthen links among international and national groups to foster information exchange and discussions for effective forest management. This must be paired with measures that recognise and protect Intellectual Property Rights.

Policy Strategy 4.1.2 Information and Communication Technology

Opportunities exist for the inclusion of ICT in enhancing sustainable forest management practices and ensuring balance between revenue generation with environmental protection. Achieving better balance requires the development of periodically updated spatial databases that keep track of the impacts of logging, mining and other activities in the forest. Efforts will be made to move beyond monitoring at coarse spatial scales in order to better understand forest degradation in Guyana. Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), sensors that can be operated at local scales, and other technological advances will be pursued to improve measurement of finer scale changes. These systems will be paired with more comprehensive databases for monitoring changes at these scales.

Policy Strategy 4.1.3 Non-timber and Eco-tourism Research

Marketing and product development research (including the use of by-products) remains an area of pressing importance in Guyana, given that the forestry and eco-tourism sectors can lead to a higher level of employment. As a part of developing value-added products, the GFC and its partners, including the Forest Producers Association, Guyana Manufacturers Association, Guyana Marketing Corporation, etc. shall conduct research in support of improved processing, promotion, and marketing of forest-based products and services.

Policy Goal 4.2 Education and Training

Training and education in forestry and forestry-related disciplines must be provided at all levels of education in Guyana. Public education and awareness of forestry issues, therefore, must be promoted as well as an appreciation for the sustainable management of forestry resources of Guyana and the global role Guyana's forest play in mitigating the effects of climate change. The principles of equal opportunity and affirmative action must be applied in respect of the education and training of youths, women and indigenous people if a highly trained and dedicated workforce and stakeholders are to assume full responsibility for conserving, protecting and sustainably managing Guyana's forest. The strategy to accomplish requires general education for all Guyanese, specialized technical education for public and private sector jobs in forest-related endeavors, and highly trained social, economic, ecological, and environmental scientists and engineers.

Policy Strategy 4.2.1 Public Education and Awareness

Participation and collaboration benefit from informed engagements. Public education and awareness is therefore, very important when stakeholders are involved in consultation, needs assessment, investigation, synthesis and consensus building aimed at ensuring equity in distribution of benefits and efficiency and efficacy in the execution of sustainable forest management. Public education must provide communities with an appreciation for both the benefits of forests as well as the consequences of over-exploitation, environmental degradation, and poverty. The activities under this strategy will build stakeholders' understanding and capacity to engage meaningfully.

Box 2. Key competencies for workforce training

- Stakeholder engagement, conducting meetings, conflict resolution, customer relations.
- Record keeping, report writing, writing forest plans, local media press releases.
- Forest laws, policies, regulations, rules, codes, monitoring, enforcement
- Wood and NTFP processing, eco-tourism practices and standards
- Wildlife conservation and protection laws and enforcement.
- Protected areas laws and enforcement.
- Mining regulations and enforcement.
- International agreements with respect to the forest.
- National policies and their relationship to forest policy.

Policy Strategy 4.2.2 Workforce Training

There is need for accredited and specialized vocational training in a variety of natural and social science skills.. Partnerships will be pursued (locally, nationally and internationally) to assess needs, develop curricula and deliver comprehensive training programs. Programmes at the technical, certificate, degree and associate degree levels will be strengthened, with the intention of preparing students for the job environment, as well as continuously upgrading staff capacity at GFC and related agencies.

Policy Strategy 4.2.3 Training and Development for Forest Research

The eyes of the globe are on Guyana and its unique natural resources. Guyana has made commitments to maintain the national forest relatively intact and has repeatedly emphasized that its forest are maintained sustainably. Guyanese therefore have to further develop their knowledge and understanding of these issues, and demonstrate practices that will ensure continuous benefits for current and future generations. The strategy to accomplish this is to develop Guyanese capacity to engage in research, apply the knowledge, verify effectiveness, and continuously improve by adaptive management.

APPENDIX 1 – HISTORY OF GUYANA’S FOREST POLICIES

Guyana’s first National Forest Policy Statement (NFPS) was drafted in 1997 against a backdrop of the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio, the influence of multi-lateral organizations as it grappled with high foreign debt, and the first draft of the National Development Strategy. Later an accompanying framework document, namely the Draft National Forest Plan was approved in 2001. While the Statement outlined the national goals and ideals for the sustenance and use of the forest resources, the draft National Forest Plan provided the methods by which these broad objectives would be pursued and achieved. More specifically, the NFPS focused on six (6) policy areas, namely Land Use, Forest Management, Forest Industry, Research and Information, Forest Training and Education, and Forest Administration and Governance. The draft National Forest Plan centred around ten (10) programme areas which provide the prescriptions for policy (NFPS) implementation and compliance with the regulations. It identifies responsibilities for implementation, describes mechanisms for monitoring and providing feedback to policy decision-makers and informs the overall planning process. The Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) was entrusted with the mandate to ensure that Guyana’s forest resources are sustainably managed and conserved. The Commission was established in 1979 having evolved out of the Forestry Department which was in existence since 1925.

Subsequent to the formulation of the Forest Policy Statement, Guyana developed several other policies, guidelines and strategies to manage the nation’s forested patrimony: the 1953 Forests Act was revised in 2009; the GFC Act of 1979 was revised in 2007; a Code of Practice for forest concession operations was developed; programmes were implemented to broaden the range of species harvested for commercial purposes through the promotion of Lesser Utilized Wood Species, a National Log Export Policy was instituted in 2009 and efforts were made to add greater value to the products for export. Forest dependent communities and other groups were engaged in programmes to generate employment and provide greater access to forest resources, especially in low-income rural areas. This was accomplished through the issuance of State Forest Permissions (SFPs) which was one of the three categories of State forest leases. Wood Cutting Leases (WCL) and Timber Sales Agreements (TSA) are the other two forms of tenureship. Also, the GFC provided support to small and mid-sized entities in areas of governance, financial management, organizational support, sustainable forest management, academic vocational training and in resources and other capacity support. Additionally, the Forestry Training Centre Inc.- the training associate of the GFC, assisted in providing training in saw doctoring, timber grading, forest management and forest laws.

Sustainable forest management (SFM) was a core operational part of the GFC’s mandate and work - through 28 forest stations, mobile monitoring units and staff. Forest legality i.e. the legitimacy of forest operations and products are verified through the Guyana Legality Assurance System (GLAS) whereby a log tracking system was used to check and verify legal custody at various points along the production chain.

The GFC and associated agencies, including the Forestry Training Centre Inc. (FTCI) and the Forest Products Development and Marketing Council (FPDMC) worked with private sector bodies (Forest Products Association and other Association bodies), donors and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to pursue and provide opportunities for small and large operators, forest based communities and forest enterprises on sustainable forest management and wood processing. GFC was responsibility for management of the Mangrove Forest, a protected species critical to the maintenance of Guyana’s sea defence and the fishery industry.

The first revision of the NFPS and NFP came in response to the CRG’s promulgation of its Low Carbon

Development Strategy (LCDS) which established that Guyana would maintain its forest cover in order to offer climate services to the global community. The LCDS was being used to garner payments from the international community in return for the ecosystem services the country provided. The first Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the CRG and the Kingdom of Norway in 2009. Financial support for Guyana was linked to its success in limiting greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and establishing institutions and practices to strengthen Guyana's ability to adopt and implement a REDD-plus Governance Development Plan (RGDP) including the development of a Monitoring, Reporting and Verification System (MRVS), developed and implemented by the GFC, to provide a performance measurement framework for the REDD+ financing mechanism. This was recognition of the national and global responsibility for the sustainable management of Guyana's tropical rain forests while remaining an important source of income and development.

Since the 2011 Policy and Plan were promulgated there have been some significant accomplishments. The national forest policy statement and associated forest plan covers priority forest strategies such as sustainability, training and education, revenue generation and research. Taken together, these priorities allow current and future generations of Guyanese to enjoy tangible forest-related benefits via tactics such as the encouragement of value-added and non-traditional products, and improved forest governance.

At an international level, the forest policy adds to Guyana's commitments as relates to climate change and conservation by working to ensure the sustainable use of the forests as well as to preserve the forests as a net carbon sink. Together with other national policies, such as the LCDS, the forest policy has established Guyana's "green credentials" and positioned Guyana strategically at the global level.

The forest plan establishes a work programme for the GFC to assure the implementation of the policy. The plan contains detailed and logically ordered programmes, activities, expected outcomes and indicators, and are a clear and compelling guide for stakeholders. The framework for the forest plan also establishes a solid base from which to monitor and evaluate progress being made towards implementing the plan.

A significant amount of institutional frameworks are in place to assure the successful implementation of the forest policy. Key among the institutions is the GFC, a well-structured, methodologically strong and coherent organization. Under the GFC, the systems for regulating, managing and monitoring forest-related activities are relatively strong. Institutions such as the GGMC, the EPA and GLSC have an important and complementary role to play alongside the GFC.

When it comes to logging, the forest policy is supported in its implementation by a code of practice for loggers, which establishes the rules for sustainably harvesting trees. Systems for monitoring compliance with the code are strong. The code of practice is relatively well respected by loggers, who face significant and predictable penalties for infringements.

Inclusion, participation, transparency and accountability are key governance concepts that have been promoted via the forest policy and its accompanying plan. Here, stakeholder engagements have featured prominently in the work around forests. The GFC and other institutions routinely engage stakeholders, including Indigenous communities, the private sector, state institutions and civil society, on such topics as REDD+, EU FLEGT, climate change, LCDS and forest policy reviews such as this one.

Progress has been made most significantly in the formation and functioning of logging associations across the country. These associations are thought to be generally well structured, democratic, accountable and facilitative of engagement processes such as supporting policy reviews like this one.

Communities, particularly Indigenous ones, are also participating in the implementation of the forest policy, as users of the forests and as monitors. This participation relates directly to REDD+ processes that underpin the Guyana-Norway agreement, and includes the titling of land to Indigenous communities. Here, the GFC has helped to train and build capacities of these communities to manage the use of their own forests.

Importantly, systems of national and community Measurement, Reporting and Verification Systems (MRVS) have been developed by Guyana, under the stewardship of the GFC. Linked to the Guyana-Norway agreement, and falling originally under Guyana's LCDS, local stakeholders (such as in the north Rupununi and Konashen) have participated in MRVS through Community Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (CMRV) mechanisms. Annual MRVS reports have been produced and validated at the national level for five years, most recently for 2014. The MRVS benefits from the functioning of a multi-stakeholder steering committee.

When it comes to smaller commercial beneficiaries, such as the members of the logging associations, the policy creates a framework for their participation in a way that adds to an inclusive economy. The policy has also imparted capacities to these stakeholders.

The extent to which forests are protected via the forest policy is further strengthened by the designation of significant amounts of forests and land as protected areas.

Governance arrangements are allowing socio-economic benefits to flow in a way that demonstrates the sustainable and efficient usage of forest-based resources. One major benefit derived from current governance arrangements is the Guyana-Norwegian agreement (2009-17), which generates funding for Guyana on the basis of limits to tree cover loss. Funds have been used for village development projects in the hinterland as well as land titling processes for Indigenous villages.

At a systems level, the increased capacities of groups (such as village communities or small loggers associations) to take advantage of opportunities encouraged by the forest policy has led to a more efficient and effective usage of the forests on a sustainable basis. Thus, for example, training on the use of GPS technology, measurement taking and document filing systems, have contributed to increased eco-tourism, improved health and safety of loggers, restored forests (including mangroves), and enhanced access to markets and value-added products.

APPENDIX 2 – RELEVANCE OF PREVIOUS POLICY AND EMERGING ISSUES

The 2011 NFPS identified a number of actions in support of the policy, many of which are still valid and should be pursued. These include:

- (a) continue steps to ensure that its forest resources deliver substantial benefits for national development for all members of society, while not compromising the livelihood of forest dwellers;
- (b) maintain an appropriate economic climate in which investors and operators can harvest and utilize forest resources and receive a fair return on their investment;
- (c) foster the growth of an efficient national forest industry, based on national and international investment, that operates in a manner consistent with sustainable development;
- (d) adhere to transparent systems of allocation and administration of all licences and other agreements, including revenue payments and collection;
- (e) continue implementing a system for submission and approving forest management plans which meet defined standards and criteria for sustainable management;
- (f) establish codes of practice inclusive of guidelines and working standards which allow appropriate returns to operators, whilst maintaining the integrity and sustainability of the resource;
- (g) create and maintain inviolate reserves of representative samples of the various forest ecosystems which occur in the country, on a scale which is adequate to ensure their indefinite reproduction and continuation, having regard to their biodiversity;
- (h) maintain a level of control over all harvesting activities, sufficient to provide adequate protection of biodiversity and to ensure sustainable production;
- (i) create and maintain an efficient database, containing up-to-date information which is freely available to all, without compromising confidentiality, on national forest resources, their productivity, management potential, and their ecology and dynamics;
- (j) institute an effective system of information exchange and cross-sector discussion, which provides compatibility and consistency among relevant sectors of the economy;
- (k) support institutions to provide training and education in forestry and related disciplines for Guyanese nationals;
- (l) facilitate research to increase and refine the level of knowledge available on the forestry and forest industry sectors;
- (m) discharge its obligations under international treaties and agreements relevant to the forestry sector, and taken steps to ensure the continued discharge of such obligations;
- (n) maintain an environmental management system for the forestry sector which would address the environmental and social impacts of any activity within the forest and build strategies to minimize them;
- (o) ensure effective implementation of forest legality, monitoring procedures, and chain of custody protocols; and
- (p) take steps to promote sustainable management of mangrove forest.
- (q) Support work on REDD+ including the development of a Monitoring, Reporting and Verification System (MRVS).

The proposed policy will also attempt to address issues requiring governance, social, ecological, and economic considerations. These proposed approaches are not limited to the timber sector or to GFC, but are rather cross-cutting and multi-sectoral in nature.

Key interventions include:

1. Clarify the objectives of the NFPS and ensure the specific objectives consistently and

comprehensively capture all elements of the overall policy in a synergistic and coherent manner. In turn the NFP developed in support of the NFPS needs to explicitly identify all of the parties responsible for the plan and their specific responsibilities, activities, resources and timelines. The NFP activities must include continuous monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure learning and improvements in accomplishing outcomes. The NFP indicators should be measurable and allow for assessment of progress to expected outcome;

2. Promote a national programme of awareness raising about the forests and associated forest policy, the value of our forests (and not just in monetary terms) and how changed practices can sustain forests. This is key, as there is still significant need for greater stakeholder awareness and understanding of policies within the forest and natural resources sub-sectors. Improved access to information, in hard and electronic versions, is needed. Also, strengthen the skills of technical staff in undertaking stakeholder engagements.

3. Expand stakeholder engagements beyond the timber industry and into the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation at the local, regional and national levels in an effort to remedy major environmental, ecological, equity, and efficiency problems;

4. Call for greater national, regional, local and institutional coordination of policies, plans, implementation, monitoring and evaluation by all the relevant public agencies as well as the private sector, and other stakeholder;

5. Recommend increased access, incentives and support for small/medium and local forest-based wood, and eco-tourism enterprises while enabling a wider array of forest-based and timber and non-timber industry activities;

6. Support the private sector call for collaborations in creating internationally competitive products and services with minimal waste and maximal efficiency, while identifying the market for these products which include: timber, NTFPs, eco-tourism or environmental services. This also includes working with the private sector to improve their performance in areas under their responsibility (eg., processing, recovery rates, marketing, etc.).

7. Include in the new policy a management arrangement for performing and ensuring quality M&E through mandatory review processes, such as annual reviews, external evaluations at appropriate times, and stakeholder engagement by Integrating M&E into a communications plan that supports the implementation of the policy;

8. Rationalize the institutional arrangements between the multiple concerned agencies by: creating an integrated data hub, harmonization of maps and approval processes across agencies; strengthening mechanisms for improved collaboration and coordination; address legislative overlap and lack of clarity; streamline and harmonize field operations, in order to reduce wastage, illegality and undue damage to forests;

9. attract and retain more specialists into the sector and deepen technical training opportunities, including forest research, silviculture, communications, stakeholder engagement, and conflict resolution;

10. Improve maintenance of hinterland roads, including due consideration given to the cost and

maintenance of “private roads on state land” which are used by others;

11. Move from a punitive enforcement regime to a system more based on self-regulation, enlightened self-interest, free-market principles;
12. Strictly monitor for compliance with strict enforcement and stiff penalties for defaulters, blacklist bad actors in both the public agencies and the private sector and provide whistleblower protection;
13. Secure improved resources for public agencies’ staff, including as relates to salaries, tools, equipment and transportation;
14. Improve appraisal/audit systems to monitor public agencies staff performance, including through stakeholder participation;
15. Continuous review of the pricing structure forest products and facilitate the consolidation of primary products, processing facilities, and wholesale and retail sales for small and medium sized operator;
16. Create a national forest inventory, including biodiversity and special interest areas, to establish: baseline data for planning, research, and the basis for auctioning forests for timber extraction;

APPENDIX 3 - FOREST RELATED LAWS AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES INVOLVED IN GUYANA'S FOREST

There are number of laws to conserve, protect, and utilize the resources of Guyana's forest. Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC), established by the GFC Act in 2007, is responsible for the management and regulation of Guyana's forests on State Lands (Forest Act, 2009) and overseeing the implementation of key technical aspects of international agreements such as Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+) climate change activities in Guyana. The GFC's main responsibilities are: policy implementation, sustainable forest management including conservation operations for purposes of carbon sequestration and environmental services, community forestry and planning the effective utilization of Guyana's State Forest Resources. GFC is responsible for enforcement of forest laws and regulations, monitoring and control of social and environmental impacts of operations within the State Forest Estate, collection of revenues from forestry activities and implementation of the national Monitoring Reporting and Verification System for country level land-use and forest change monitoring. The GFC works with private and Amerindian Village lands management structure (*e.g. Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs and Village Councils*) to provide technical assistance for sustainable forest management activities.

The Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) created in 1979 administers the 1989 Mining Act and 1971 Minerals Act which provides for the management of large, medium and small scale mining claims on state lands including those on State Forests. Through a memorandum of understanding between the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) and the GGMC, the EPA has environmental oversight of mining operations, including those in the forest. Of note, GGMC can issue mining licenses on State Forest (but no other) and miners could deforest the licensed area, which is now the greatest driver of deforestation in Guyana.

Guyana Lands & Surveys Commission (GL&SC), established under the GLSC Act 1999, is the state's regulatory body for lands, under the Land Act. Its primary role is to survey and map the land and water resources of Guyana; to take charge and act as guardian over all public lands, rivers and creeks, to administer and manage public lands to provide land-based information to a broad range of public and private sector entities and interests, and to develop land policy and land use plans. GLSC has responsibility for the preparation of land use plans. The function is *"to prepare land use plans for Guyana or any part of Guyana, except any municipality which is subject to a planning scheme (or interim development control pending the preparation of a planning scheme) under the Town and Country Planning Act"*.

The GFC supports the GLSC in this role since land use plans and policies play a key role in the implementation of forest policy in accordance with the following guidelines: (a) the nation's forest policy shall be an integral part of a comprehensive National Land Use Plan. This Plan shall be based on land use policies that recognise the sometimes conflicting but legitimate interests of different stakeholders, and shall promote a process of developing a consensus on land use. (b) Priority shall be given to the preparation of a National Land Use plan which provides: (i) guidelines for environmental protection and sustainable resource utilization; (ii) a legal framework for resource management; (iii) national programmes for resource management; and (iv) an institutional framework for land use implementation. (c) National Committees, regional authorities and local communities shall be involved in the formulation and approval of land use plans. (d) The Commission shall give consideration to the recommendations and principles emerging from the discussions of the Special Land Use Committee (SLUC).

The Protect Areas Commission (PAC) established in 2011 by the Protected Areas Act (PAA) provides for *“creation, management and financing of a national system of protected areas; the maintenance of ecosystem services of national and global importance including climate regulation; the establishment of a protected areas commission; the establishment and management of a protected areas trust fund; the fulfillment of Guyana's international environmental responsibilities; public participation in protected areas and conservation; and related purposes.”*

The objectives of the PAA are to: (a) provide for the conservation of biological diversity, natural landscapes, seascapes and wetlands;(b) safeguard ecosystem services; (c) establish a national protected areas system; (d) provide for the recognition of the intrinsic value of biodiversity and associated spiritual and cultural values; (e) enhance national pride in and encourage stewardship of Guyana's natural heritage, at the national, regional, local, community and individual levels of society; (f) assist in safeguarding Guyana's sovereignty over its natural heritage and to regulate access to the nation's biological resources; (g) give appropriate recognition to the conservation efforts and achievements of Amerindian Villages and Amerindian Communities; (h) promote ecologically sustainable development; (i) assist in the implementation of Guyana's international environmental responsibilities to conserve the nation's natural heritage; (j) promote the rehabilitation of degraded areas and the restoration of ecological integrity; (k) promote the recovery and rehabilitation of species which are vulnerable, threatened or endangered.

The Wildlife Conservation and Management Act (WCMA) of 2016 was enacted *“to provide for the protection, conservation, management, sustainable use, internal and external trade of Guyana’s wildlife.”* This Act applies to all wildlife species including those listed in – (a) the First, Second, and Third Schedules which lists all species included in Appendix I, II, and III respectively of the CITES Convention. The Guyana Wildlife Conservation and Management Commission (WCMC) was established by the WCMA.

Some of the functions of the Commission are to: (a) provide effective management of wildlife so as to ensure its conservation, and sustainable use; (b) prevent over-exploitation; (c) develop and recommend strategies in the field of conservation, management and sustainable use of species of wildlife; (f) devise measures for the protection of endangered or threatened species of wildlife; (h) identify and recommend areas for dedication to wildlife conservation; (i) grant, amend and cancel licences, permits and certificates in respect of activities related to species of wildlife; (l) monitor and enforce compliance with the terms and conditions of licences, permits and certificates; (m) administer, promote and enforce compliance with the provisions of this Act and any other laws relating to wildlife; (n) disseminate information and promote education, training and awareness of wildlife conservation, management, sustainable use, the international wildlife trade and implementation of the Convention; (o) promote scientific research and knowledge of wildlife, within their natural habitats and for ex situ conservation management; (q) develop, implement and monitor collaborative arrangements for the conservation, management and sustainable use of wildlife; (r) coordinate, in consultation with stakeholders, the establishment and maintenance of wildlife conservation and management plans and programmes; (s) on a periodic basis, assess and report on the status of species of wildlife in Guyana in consultation and collaboration with other institutions; (t) advise the Minister on action to be taken for the implementation and enforcement of the Convention; First, Second and Third Schedules of the CITES Convention.

Wild Bird Protection Act of 1919, last amended in 1997 was enacted for the protection of certain

scheduled Wild Birds and it is targeted at any person who (a) knowingly wounds, or kills, any wild bird specified in the First Schedule; (b) exposes or offers for sale or exports or attempts to export from Guyana, any wild birds or part of any wild bird captured or killed and (c) keeps or confines any bird whatsoever in any cage or other receptacle which is not sufficient in height, length and breadth to permit the bird to stretch its wings freely.

The Environmental Protection Act of 1996, establishing the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was enacted to *“provide for the management, conservation, protection and improvement of the environment, the prevention or control of pollution, the assessment of the impact of economic development on the environment, the sustainable use of natural resources and for matters incidental thereto or connected therewith.”* Four important functions of the EPA are: (a) to take such steps as are necessary for the effective management of the natural environment so as to ensure conservation, protection, and sustainable use of its natural resources; (b) to promote the participation of members of the public in the process of integrating environmental concerns in planning for development on a sustainable basis; (k) to establish and co-ordinate institutional linkages locally, nationally, regionally and internationally; (l) to play a coordinating role in the preparation and implementation of cross-sectoral programmes of environmental contents;

The Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment (MNRE) was established in 2012 with responsibilities for forestry, mining, environmental management, wildlife, protected areas, land use planning and coordination. Since 2016 the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) responsibilities have been re-focused on the extractive sectors forestry, mining, and on oil and gas, since 2016 when a major offshore oil deposit was discovered. The environmental portfolio has been transferred to the Ministry of the Presidency (MOP), which has since established an overarching Department of the Environment (DOE).

The Ministries of Infrastructure (MoI), Communities (MoC), Business and Tourism (MoB&T), Finance (MoF), Indigenous Peoples Affairs (MoIPA), Social Protection (MoSP), and Education (MoE) have responsibilities for forest-based infrastructure, communities, eco-tourism, financial incentives, taxes and tax concessions (Guyana Revenue Authority, GRA), national and international standards (National Bureau of Standards, NBS), Amerindian concerns, and health, safety and workers' rights, and human capacity development.