

In re: To the follow-up Comments-submitted to the Forest Service in May11' 2011 re: The Forest Planning Rule and Oct.30 '2015 Forest Plan Draft.

US FOREST SERVICE

Wednesday, December 28, 2016 8:38 PM

DEC 28 2016

From: Diana de Ju

Sent: Wednesday, December 28, 2016 8:27:56 PM UTC

To: commentselyunqueplan@fs.fed.us

Cc: Ricardo Ju

Subject: In re: To the follow-up Comments-submitted to the Forest Service in May11' 2011 re: The Forest Planning Rule and Oct.30 '2015 Forest Plan Draft.

EL YUNQUE NATIONAL FOREST

Greetings to all. My name is Diana de Ju and I humbly Re-Submit the comments (plz. read) which I wrote on Oct. '2015 re. the then Forest Plan Draft. Please note the suggestions I submit are in answer to the concerns I still have -after having read the recent FINAL FOREST PLAN of Sept'16. The FS Plan is fantastic- and I applaud their huge efforts, but I sincerely hope the suggestions and concerns of today- will be considered in the preparing of this FINAL Forest Plan for "2017"..

.. Concerns or Suggestions ..

1) Re: The Telecommunications Towers facilities in "El Yunque". I understand the Com. facilities at the east end of the El Yunque Peak site have presented interference issues (which were being minimized). Note that from a distance and at the Recreation site near this area- the shocking view of Large Antennas and their large (unsightly)concrete structures are super visible. I understand there is a "proposal for the removal of this facility"?

**But at the East Peak Com. Facility- (since there is no Recreation Site nearby), it's less visible to tourists.

So, I understand the "NOISE POLLUTION" here "continues" and the ever present concern re: the amount of "RADIATION EMISSION LEVELS" also. The FCC-Fed'l Com.Commission- needs to MONITOR this closely, according to regulations

(for follow-up). These problems need to be addressed, and explore what up-to -date (green-technology) exists now.

*This could help "minimize" the size or quantity of structures and the amount/ frequency of radiation being emitted. To ultimately REDUCE the "negative impacts to the bio-diversity" of this pristine area! *Though tourists may not see this area; our nature and different species can feel its' probable adverse effects..

2) Re: EDUCATION.. It is interesting that in "2012" the CAPP- Collaborative Committee for Public Participation was formed. One of its' goals was to improve collaboration and community involvement, during this Forest Plan Revision process. Also to establish a commitment to conserve the priority eco-systems and provide social opportunities/economic benefits to both visitors and local communities. Now in 2016 with the Forest Service, we of the (CAPP) recently began with our 1st. (CAPP) Education Project- at (2) schools (in south of Forest). We thank the Fish n' Wildlife Dept. for their

grant- which energized this joint effort. Hopefully this Education Project will serve as an incentive- and spread to

reach all of the 9 Municipalities (towns) that surround the El Yunque Rainforest!

* Under Education Guidelines (3.2.3) pg.64 - (G6) mentions the need to "update materials" for the youth especially. We need to "increase environmental literacy" and help educate our local communities- by integrating their schools and the municipalities that border the FOREST region. This calls for adapting EDUCATION and INTERPRETIVE teaching materials

to the "LOCAL CONTEXT". One example is (with all due respect) is the use of the "owl and bear" -widely recognized stateside -for teaching. Experience has shown that local youth of this small Caribbean Island, would relate even more

to a "local character" such as the Puerto Rican Parrot and our Coqui etc. (at the Elementary School age). Also (G6)

mentions re: (Interpretive and Educational programs)- they are assessed to gather feedback and monitor the

effectiveness of the programs. This will help identify "future needs" direction- that can be added during the Prog. re: for example, identified issues- that need help (to resolve with time and continued focus).

Plz. note that it is imperative that our "Forest Service Volunteer Program" be given more attention and expanded, so as to

be a vital key also, to the success of any new educational efforts..

(3) Re: Need for New Trails System- that will connect the El Yunque Forest with other adjacent lands in lower forest areas. To help create new RECREATION opportunities at the more lower elevations of our Forest System. The El Yunque Trail would reach the coastlands of the North-East Ecological Corridor Reserve (RCEN), and would integrate and facilitate alternative trail access from for example, The Municipality of Rio Grande and Luquillo- to the RECREATIONAL areas of the Forest. The interest in this project continues but, (plz. see #3 of my report)- the collaboration with local towns, residents

and organized regional groups needs to be strengthened. This need is mentioned in the 'Forest Plan 2016' that-

for years the effort has gained interest with groups such as the Puerto Rican Land Trust, The Coalición Pro-Corredor Ecologico del NE (with its' 14 org's.) and the Puerto Rico Camping Society. This focus would help satisfy the new increased necessities of the Dept. of Recreation and Tourism -for the over one million yearly visitors to the Forest. By helping to alleviate the "over density situation" being created, especially during the Forest high season.

(4) Increased protection of the Rivers that empty into the Atlantic Ocean and its' Coral Reefs:

Plz. see (#4) of my report. The (Pitahaya, Juan Martin, Sabana and Quebrada Fajardo Rivers) are examples

of rivers that are born in and flow from "El Yunque" and later empty into the CEN Reserve. These Rivers and Riparian

Zones "connect Hydrologically- the CEN Reserve and the El Yunque Forest". Nearby projects should be minimal and

Eco-touristic to maintain its sustainability and ecologically appropriate management. These Eco-systems clearly

have no boundaries. The proper and complete protection of the EYNF should be thought of as extending beyond their

29,000 acres. To ensure the "entire protection and continuity" of all its' delicately balanced eco-systems.

**Plz. note that the possible contamination caused by deterioration of the quality of the waters (due to human

activity as the principal factor/ sedimentation etc.) -results in the environmental degradation of the coral reefs etc.

The Environmental Education at all levels should coincide with these facts, and the need for "Education

from the Forest to the Communities". Also to establish conservation initiatives from Federal property to State

and private areas - to improve the MANAGEMENT and MONITORING of Aquatic Ecosystems. The use of a RENEWED

EFFORTS by all parties concerned - to include the "public participation" in all our efforts and the engagement of

community based groups, enterprises etc. for River and Riparian area restoration and conservation efforts!

(5) (Plz. read pg.4 of my report #5) Re: Stray and abandoned animal (dogs and cats) in the El Yunque Forest.

This report explains many facts which need to be scrutinized due to the impending HEALTH ISSUE that with each

year threatens to explode, and maybe affect the health of visitors- to our beloved Forest.

*Note that at the "2005" Forest National Centennial Congress in Washington, the then Caribbean National Forest

made an "Official Issue" of the Exotic Species or Non-native Stray Animals. "Stray Dogs and Cats" were among the

(5) listed species, that are invading the Forest. At the Congress they stated that "Domestic animals exotic to the

Forest (such as dogs and cats) need to be kept away from the Forest and the government should provide for

SHELTERS to address this issue". When you realize that for years there has been the documentation of INCREASED

NUMBERS of MONGOOSE which are also invading the Forest and are "TESTING POSITIVE for the RABIES VIRUS".

The concern should profoundly increase since as stated in this Forest Plan-The population density surrounding the

Forest has increased. There are now more homes near-by with mascots that are sadly abandoned near or in the

Forest vicinity and become strays. The intermingling of SICK MONGOOSE with the stray population 'is inevitable'.

and obviously a RABIES THREAT is eminent..

*pg 143 (3.4.4.4) re: NON-NATIVE FAUNA states- Terrestrial Species such as Mongoose , feral dogs and cats (as

reported in the '2014' Forest Plan Assesment states " some of these species are associated with Recreational Areas

(due to the "availability of food leftovers"). Apparently the effects to possible Health is expected to be controlled

by "the trapping and removal of feral dogs, cats and mongoose" which is considered as part of the standard and

guidelines management applications. *Again on pg.57 (S1) re: At-Risk Species: FAUNA It has stated that "Invasive

species shall be controlled"! Apparently the methods being utilized at present are not truly successful. I believe

"this issue has to be re-addressed" now more than ever.

We must work together to find a solution. Forest Serv./Dept. of Agriculture/Wildlife Serv./Animal Protection groups

and the P.R. Government- need to cooperate and also make a joint effort with the surrounding Municipalities

(due to this Health Issue) to proceed with the plan of PROMOTING THE possibility of "making an ANIMAL SHELTER

in the EYNF periphery"! To address this Issue and to serve as an alternative to the communities. Where they could

bring the unwanted animals to a close-by SHELTER and not abandon them at the Forest. Besides the teaching of

Humane Education here and at the adjacent schools. This Shelter would serve with "low cost sterilization and

Vaccination Programs" and even Adoption Progs. etc., to stimulate responsibility in the families. Also to teach

and make the local families aware of the delicate Rainforest that surrounds them and ways to help their forest.

Note that on pg.16 (1.7) ISSUES- states increasing populations and developments near the Forest etc. may influence

Management Activities. Since now the Forest smiles upon the incorporation of the communities in the lower

elevations of the Forest -which should reduce the pressure to the sensitive areas of the forest. The creation of a

near-by Animal Shelter would go a long way also, towards helping with this stray animal problem..

I thank you all for your interest in reading my concerns and truly hope we join efforts to continue to help as much

as possible the completion of this Forest Plan and that it be done as justly possible for the protection of our so

unique and beautiful National Forest and for the well being of our citizens and many tourists that each year visit..



Cordially submitted by : Diana de Ju (CPCEN/ CCPP)

Please feel free to contact me if you wish any clarifications on what I have expressed.

My cell # is (787) 556-1590 / e-mail use: rlvew45@hotmail.com

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30 de Octubre 2015

EL YUNQUE NATIONAL FOREST

Saludos a todos, de reciente estuve en hospital- sigo mejor pero me excuso de la próxima reunión del CCPP. Les envío copia de 5 aspectos que deseo compartir con ustedes sobre el draft de la Revisión. Como miembro del Comité "CCPP" Comité Consultor sobre Participación Pública es un placer compartir con ustedes algunas de las preocupaciones que DM (junto a las que ustedes también presenten) --podremos concentrarnos a trabajar y remediar. Para el bien de El Yunque y las comunidades que comparten dicho espacio tan bendecido, además beneficiar los que visitan cada día (locales y turistas). Redacto esta info. en inglés- ya que irá al "Forest Svce. stateside" también, para que ellos tengan mejor comprensión de los temas- mil gracias.

*Regarding this DRAFT- we need to maintain STANDARDS to help achieve or maintain desired conditions, to avoid "undesirable" effects and to meet applicable "legal" requirements. A Monitoring System is needed for all possible or proposed actions. The Ecological, Social and Economic needs of the broader landscape must be considered to increase regional environmental literacy and educating our local communities, by identifying and overcoming barriers that "inhibit" these areas from connecting to the natural landscapes within and surrounding the Forest (All LANDS POLICY).

* draft (pg14) Since the Forest has not done any large scale public participation efforts in recent years, any NEW Scientific information and "New Issues" or concerns that have emerged should be addressed..

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'EL YUNQUE' NATIONAL FOREST – DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN**(1) REGARDING TELECOMMUNICATION TOWERS FACILITIES IN "EL YUNQUE"**

We understand that community leaders were the only group to mention concerns regarding the presence of communication towers in "El Yunque" National Forest at the "El Yunque" and the "East Peak" areas which already have Special Use Permits.

It is important to note that at the "El Yunque" Peak some interference issues have supposedly, been minimized but at the East Peak concerns continue, for example, with the digital broadcast conversion and also the amount of radiation emission levels being produced also noise pollution.

The radiation levels, etc. done by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) needs to be monitored closely according to regulations. These observations and findings need to be followed up frequently with the results of the studies reported to the agencies involved for serious follow up.

This results in the identification of existing and potential problems and the need to employ all out efforts to minimize them.

It may be necessary, if needed, to look into any possible Agreements having to do with "Reglamento Conjunto" and the possibility of any amendments deemed necessary should they apply.

It is vital to explore seriously what modern, up-to-date technology exists that can be used to minimize the size or quantity of structures and also minimize the amount and frequency of radiation being emitted which could reduce the negative impact to the bio-diversity of this pristine area .

(2.)

EDUCATION

Because of our "All Lands Policy" to increase environmental literacy and educating local communities by integrating schools and municipalities in the region and adapting education and interpretive materials to the "local context", I will elaborate on some of the issues

Although I personally do not belong to this Education Committee presently, for several years in the past, I assisted, Sra. Blanca Ruiz and others in the Forest Service with the Education Program available at that time. The program consisted of inviting the Directors and Teachers of the surrounding schools for a 3 day Forest Service Educational Training. We provided "Treasure Chests" of information and teaching materials (videos, slides, booklets, etc.) which they could borrow to implement programs in their respective schools.

- Obviously, because of economic issues...this is no longer feasible. However, it could be possible to implement this type of program, on a smaller scale, utilizing some members of our present Forest Service staff, community ecological organizations and volunteers that will instead **bring the program to the schools** and help us provide this much needed service.

-Please note, that It is imperative that our "Forest Service Volunteer Program" be given more attention and expanded, so as to be a vital key to the success of any new educational efforts.

-This follows the Plan- which calls for the Forest to work with the schools and community and "to integrate and up date" all new ecological information for all interpretation programs and at "El Portal."

-As far as "adapting educational and interpretive materials **"to the local context"** ...besides the use of the owl and bear which is "widely recognized stateside"... in my experience, the locals of our small Caribbean Island, especially the youngsters, would relate more to a **"local character"** such as the **Puerto Rican Parrot and our Coqui**. In this way, the educational messages would be more visually understood by the communities and especially our elementary school- age-children.

(3)

NEED FOR NEW TRAILS SYSTEM

There exists a need for **alternative trail systems** that will connect the National Forest with other adjacent lands and lower forest areas. To help create new RECREATION opportunities at the more lower

elevations of our Forest System -which could reach the coastlands of the North-East Ecological Corridor Reserve. This proposes to enhance and integrate trail systems that will facilitate alternative access from for ex. the municipalities of Rio Grande and Luquillo to the recreational areas of the Forest.

* To achieve this goal it is imperative to develop a strong collaboration with municipalities, local residents and organized regional groups. For a while now, the National Forest has taken this possibility into account in efforts with "The Puerto Rican Land Trust, the Coalición Pro-Corredor Ecológico del Noreste" with its 15 org's. and the Puerto Rico Camping Society (Dr. Sheila Ward) The focus has been to identify viable alternatives to connect Forest regional Systems to a Regional Trail System during the first three years of the Plan. This would be to help satisfy the "new increased necessities" of the Dept. of Recreation and Tourism (for the over one million yearly visitors) at the Forest. By helping alleviate the "over-density situation" created especially during high season- by the interest tourists and visitors seem to always have, for small waterfalls and HIKES to the "same areas" of the Forest at the (Mina Falls, Quebrada Juan Diego, La Coca) etc and other pristine areas. I understand these organizations will continue to promote and work on this most needed and interesting project possibility, (to create a new trail connection from El Yunque to the newly protected Nature Reserve in the CEN Corredor and beyond) is already being studied by the Forest and local organizations.

(4)

RIVERS AND CORAL REEFS

We understand that there will be continued conservation and restoration of a 20 meter wide periphery at both sides of the rivers that are born and flow from "El Yunque" for ex. the Rios (Pitahaya, Juan Martin, Sabana and Quebrada Fajardo) that empty at the CEN coast of the Atlantic Ocean. It is necessary that these be given more protection to guarantee the secure passage of the multiple endemic species that depend on the delicate ecological balance of the area to continue with their migration (as the organisms move from one place to another) to be able to complete their life cycle. These rivers and riparian zones "connect hydrologically the CEN and the Forest". Those lands adjacent to the rivers also need further protection. So any construction or projects nearby, should be minimal and truly Ecoturistic- to maintain the sustainability and have ecologically appropriate management. The important "inter-connections between all these specific entities and eco-systems" is clearly evident and have no boundaries. The proper protection of our EYNF should be thought of as extending beyond their 29,000 acres. To ensure the "entire protection and continuity" of all its' delicately balanced eco-systems!

What is the end result of the waters reaching their destination at the ocean level? Because of the contamination caused by the deterioration of the quality of the waters (due to human activity as the principal factor). The end result is the environmental degradation of the coral reefs of Puerto Rico associated with the amounts of sedimentation of our coastal waters and eventual pollution of the ocean.

* The Environmental Education at all levels (Federal, State, Municipal, local communities)etc. should coincide with the fact that these waters are "born at EYNF" and flow down the Forest thru the "hydrologically connected Forest waterways" to the NE Ecological Corridor coast- which finally empty into the Atlantic Ocean.. This means doing all possible to ensure the protection of the pristine waterways, adjacent lands and rivers which contain a threatened, unique and irreplaceable biodiversity which depends on and is part of the (EYNF).. This coincides with the need for " Education from the Forest- to the Communities" as a renewed effort by all parties concerned, to include the "public participation" in all our efforts..

(5) Stray and abandoned animals (dogs and cats) in the El Yunque National Forest.

Please note that at the "2005" Forest National Centennial Congress in Washington, the then Caribbean National Forest made an "Official Issue" of the Exotic Species or Non-Native (stray animals) which are present in the Forest. "Stray Dogs and Cats" were among the (5) listed species, that are invading the Forest (then there was only one trained Animal Control Tech.) working with the Stray situation- back in "2000" this was already a problem). At the Congress they stated that "more efforts need to be expended on the protection of native species", "Domestic animals exotic to the Forest (such as dogs and cats) need to be kept away from the Forest and the government should provide for shelters to address this issue". *At present the Stray animal problem continues and there is "no Animal Control Tech" working for the Forest re. this " issue"now. There has been for years the documentation also, of increased numbers of Mongoose which are invading the Forest and are "testing positive" for the Rabies Virus. Since there are "no Animal Shelters" in the periphery of the EYNF and since the population density has increased here with more homes etc--more stray animals are invading the Forest since many pets are sadly abandoned there, when they are no longer wanted/or sick! The intermingling of sick mongoose with the stray population is inevitable and obviously a Rabies threat is eminent.. This situation could present a "future Public Health Problem", especially for the locals and tourists which visit our EYNF- by the possibility of their being molested by sick invasive animals and or mongoose (which might be sick with Rabies). In various public forums the P.R. gov't. has been informed of this situation and since "2006" the USDA/APHIS/Wildlife Services were again informed of the problem and asked to help in eradicating this rabies situation- that in a short while could cause a crises due to the immense health threat that is prevalent.

We must work together to find a solution. In this case the U.S. Forest Service/ Dept of Agriculture/Wildlife Svcs and of course the P.R.Government need to cooperate and simply make a joint effort with the surrounding Municipalities (due to this Health Issue) to proceed with the plan of making an "Animal Shelter in the EYNF periphery". To address this Stray Animal Issue and to serve as an alternative to the communities- where they could bring the unwanted animals to a close-by shelter and not abandon them at the Forest. Besides Humane Education at

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the schools, this Shelter would serve with "low cost sterilization and Vaccination Programs"and even Adoption Progs. etc to stimulate responsibility in the families. Also with continued Education campaigns for the youth and families regarding the proper care of their animals and the values needed to really care for their pets. Besides making them aware of the delicate Rainforest that surrounds them and the ways to help their forest and its unique species etc. The Animal Shelter would go a long way towards helping with this stray animal problem..

I thank you for your interest in sharing your concerns about the El Yunque Forest Mgmt. Plan and hope, what I have submitted will be of help. Please feel free to reach me to clarify anything- my cell # is (787) 556-1590.

Cordially submitted by Diana de Ju

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Diana de Ju", written in a cursive style.

DEC 28 2016

EL YUNQUE NATIONAL FOREST

10TH Grade SCIENCE PROJECT

"INVASION OF STRAY ANIMALS IN THE CARIBBEAN RAIN FOREST"



INTERVIEWS

Ken-Andres Ju Rivera/Carlos Maldonado Carrión

Science Project.. (10th.) grade Mr.Diaz/Sonifel School
By: Ken-Andres Ju Rivera and Carlos Maldonado Carrion

Topic:

In Jan.'2005 at the Nat'l. Centennial Congress in Washington, the (CNF) Caribbean National Forest made an "Official Issue" of the Exotic Species or NON-NATIVE (stray animals) which are now present in the Forest.

"STRAY DOGS and CATS" were among the 5 listed species, that are invading the CNF.

(INTERVIEW #1) With Mr.Felipe Cano (Forest Biologist of the CNF)
Date: December 20,2004

- 1) What is your position the the (CNF), especially in connection with the EXOTIC SPECIES or NON-NATIVE (stray dogs & cats) - which are now being monitored? I am the Forest Biologist, responsible for setting up work schedules related to the amounts of time set for the technicians to trap (set up traps etc.) the stray animals.
- 2) When did you 1st. notice the stray dogs and cats "exotic species" as a problem in the (CNF)? Well back in '2000 - this was already a problem, I personally became involved for 2001.
- 3) Have there been any "incidents" within the CNF involving (dogs and cats)? Well yes, particularly in the "Palo Colorado" recreational area and along the Rt.#191.
- 3a) What types of incidents? Tourists have often reported incidents of dogs and cats begging for food. Also many stray dogs have been sited along Rt.#191, (there have been about 45-55 reports of this type per year). Mr.Cano also pointed out that in the "periphery of the Forest" last year (Canovanas), a man was bit by a dog with "RABIES" and he died 3 months later due to poor follow-up.

Cont'd. Interview- with Mr. Felipe Cano (CNF-Forest Biologist).

4) How are you dealing with the situation regarding the increase of stray dogs & cats in the CNF? Well the CNF has an agreement with the "APHIS" Animal & Plant Health and Inspection Services, that one of their 3 technicians will work for the Forest. So there is only (1) actual trained Animal Control Technician, working with the Stray Problem.

4a) That is a lot of work-to cover the 28,000 acres of CNF?
Yes, it is.

4b) How are the stray dogs & cats being disposed of? Since '2001- they have been taking the strays to a "Shelter in Carolina".

4c) What has been the success rate? There has been about a 25% success rate (of capture) with cats, and 60% with dogs.

5a) Are the government agencies/mayors of the bordering towns aware of this problem? No, I don't think they realize the "magnitude" of this problem.

5b) Have they offered to intervene or help? No, they have not given us any assistance.

6a) Is LAW #242 of "Aug. 30, 2000" active at present in P.R. (which calls for Regional Animal Shelters to be established)?
No, I believe it's inactive due to a lack of funding and also politics may be involved.

(Cont'd.)

Interview with Felipe Cano (CNS, Forest Biologist)

- 6b) Do you think this LAW (amended or similar) if implemented, might help to lower or eliminate- the amounts of stray dogs or cats INVADING or being ABANDONED in the CNF? Yes it would help, because then the people would have the alternative of bringing the unwanted animals to a close-by shelter-and not abandon it in the forest.
- 7) Do you think the P.R. gov't. should take a more active role, in helping to eliminate this threat to the CNF? Yes, if we don't control this situation-it could turn very ugly. Because of so many diseases that these STRAYS might have, which could be easily transmitted. Besides of course, the eminent threat to the Forest Biodiversity is an issue also.
- 8) Do you think the P.R. government is aware of this problem, and if so- what was their reaction? Well yes, from what I have seen. Since 2000, with the passing of Law #242- they were officially informed of the stray problems. But their reaction has been very slow, as to "figuring out" something to do about it. Also the gov't. knows of The STRAY ANIMAL PROBLEM "outside" the Forest, but they don't seem aware of the INTENSITY of this problem "inside" the (CNF) Forest.
- 8a) If the newly elected P.R. gov't.- has not been officially informed (re:the stray dog&cat problem in the CNF), are you going to do so in the near future? Yes, also note that in Jan./2005 this was one of the ISSUES submitted at the CNF National Centennial Congress in Washington.
- 9) Would you like a "final draft" of our Science Project (so the CNF could use it as needed? Yes, it would be great to have. I could also use all the information gathered!
- 10) Do you believe the results of our Science Project (could lead to helping eliminate this- Stray Exotic Dog&Cat problem) if submitted to:
*The mayors of the municipalities that border our (CNF) Forest and the pertinent officials of our P.R. gov't.?
Yes! Mr. Cano believes it would be of great help. Because he thinks it's not just another person to bring something to the "table". This project would show that the citizens also see this "Stray Problem" as a threat to the Forest and because we are the future- trying to make it better for all of us.

Science Project
Ken-Andres Ju/Carlos Maldonado

(Interview #4)

Mrs. Diana de Ju, Pres. Liga Conciencia Ambiental del Este, Inc.
(LIGA)

Date: February 27, 2005

1. How long have you been active with the animal protection movement in Puerto Rico? "Since about 1982."
2. What groups have you been associated with and in what capacity? "I have been with PARE, Este, Inc. and with GALA, Inc. as Director of Humane Education." "I am also President of LIGA and direct the education efforts."
3. What is the main goal of your group? "We have two goals. First, to promote ecological education and humaness to animals which will hopefully be made part of the curriculum of our public schools system. Secondly, is to protect the area of "Corredor del Noreste (pristine coastal area between Fajardo and Luquillo), hoping that it will be made a natural reserve and If developed, for it to be with true eco-tourism in mind."
4. Do you believe there is a problem with over-population of dogs and cats in Puerto Rico? "Yes, I've written several articles regarding this concern."
5. Do you think this over-population is presenting a threat to the CNF "El Yunque"? "Yes, I think the situation might become critical at any moment."

Interview with Mrs. Diana de Ju/LIGA continued

6. Do you think the "buffer-zone" of the CNF is being negatively affected by the construction of so many residences here?

"Yes, for some time now, the "buffer-zone" of "El Yunque" has been saturated with ill-planned housing projects, etc.. As a volunteer in the forest, on various occasions, I've worked with CNF Planification trying to address potential problems that so many outside projects pose. Much proposed construction has been halted but the threats to the mainstay of the forest continues."

7. Are you aware that the CNF has listed "dogs/cats" as an exotic Species which is presenting problems to the Forest biodiversity?

"Yes, four years ago, our organization (LIGA) listed this as a potential problem. Recently, as one of the Delegates to the CNF Congress - August 2004, I again presented this as a serious concern. In turn, this was presented as an official "issue" in the January 2005. National Forest Centennial Congress in Washington, D.C." As you see, I am truly concerned regarding this matter."

8. Do you believe that "Regional Shelters" are needed in Puerto Rico, (especially around the periphery of the rainforest) and do you think this would help to eliminate the stray animal invasion of the CNF?

Yes, Regional Shelters are definitely needed islandwide. But, I feel due to the serious potential threat of stray animals already in the forest, the construction of a shelter to address this threat is of prime importance. I understand only 25% of cats and only %60 of dogs are being humanely captured. At this %, the rate of current propagation is staggering!

9. Do you think there is still time to deal with and remedy this situation? "Only if the government agencies focus on the implications of this problem and unite serious efforts to deal with the situation immediately."

Interview with Mrs. Diana de Ju/LIGA continued

10. Are you familiar with Law #242? "Yes, this was a good law, but unfortunately, it was never put into action, even though I believe 1.5 million dollars had been put aside for it to be implemented. I was pleased to learn that in September of 2004, Law #427 was created which amended Law #36 and also Law #242. Its ultimate aim is to establish regional shelters around the island. Again, I wish to express emphatically that I feel the logical plan of action would be to construct the first "model shelter" to service the communities which border the Caribbean National Forest. It is imperative that the planification of shelters involving the new Law #427, be prepared and finalized with the input of as many Government, community and humane organizations as possible, Ex. FEPA, so that a fair and just mode of action can be undertaken."
11. Do you think the local government should take an active role in Creating these shelters. "Yes, the humane organizations want to work with local government and we need their support for all efforts to be successful!"
12. Should the CNF be more forceful in asking the local government to intervene with creating shelters which would serve the population surrounding the forest? "Yes definitely, in fact, at the Centennial Congress in Washington this year, the CNS stated "domestic animals exotic to the forest, (such as cats and dogs) need to be kept away from the forest and the government should provide for shelters to address this issue." I am hoping that the local government will understand the seriousness of this very real problem and the need for their immediate intervention assisting the Forest and the humane effort which will be beneficial to all our communities and to the tourists who visit us."

April 24, 2005

To: Mr. Pablo Cruz (Supr. CNF)

Please accept this copy of our 10th grade Science Project. This project attempts to show the great need that exists for a "Regional Shelter" to be built. It would serve the communities that border our "El Yunque" rainforest.

We will also send copies to our Hon. Governor Anibal Acevedo Vilá.

We hope that the new "Law #427" will provide the incentive to build this first shelter in the periphery of the forest because the dogs and cats need help but also the biodiversity of the forest needs to be protected. We hope you will also ask the governor to intercede and ask that the 1st Regional Shelter be built to serve the towns surrounding "El Yunque".

Thank you - hope this will help.

S. I also include a petition from 3rd grade students. Tel. (787) 889-4276

Sincerely,
Ken-Andre S. [Signature]

Reciban nuestros saludos,

Recientemente les sometimos un estudio científico sobre la situación precaria que presenta "La Invasión De Los Perros Y Gatos Realengos en el (CNF)"- Bosque Nacional del Caribe. Por tal razón le entrego otra petición escolar.

En el "Día de Apreciación a los Animales" (Abril 7) en la escuela de comunidad Gabino Soto de Fajardo- se presentó una charla educativa la cual incluía detalles sobre como cuidar sus mascotas etc. También ofrecía información sobre los perros y gatos realengos en Puerto Rico, como están invadiendo nuestro Bosque, El Yunque y sus razones.

Según nuestros estudios científicos, pensamos que sería de gran ayuda el tener la alternativa de un Albergue Regional, donde los ciudadanos podrán llevar sus animales y así NO ABANDONARLOS! También serviría como un centro de información vital para la comunidad.

Por favor ayúdenos a trabajar con esta situación de una forma humana, antes de que se presenten mas problemas, todavía hay tiempo. En el (CNF) están dispuestos a ayudar al máximo en este esfuerzo.

Gracias por su atención. Para más información sobre esto- Favor comunicarse con el Sr. Felipe Cano (Biólogo Forestal) al 787 (888-1810).

Respetuosamente,
Ken-Andres Ju Rivera y Carlos Maldonado
(Estudiantes del 10mo.grado, Escuela Sonifel)

Science Project.. (10th.) grade Mr.Diaz/Sonifel School
By: Ken-Andres Ju Rivera and Carlos Maldonado Carrion

Re: The invasion of Stray Animals (dogs and cats-exotic species)
in our (CNF) Caribbean National Forest.

INTRODUCTION

The CNF-Caribbean National Forest is loved by all the citizens of Puerto Rico. It is also treasured by many tourists from around the world, due to its beauty and incredibly unique biodiversity. It is home to endangered species and is the only rainforest in the western hemisphere. It was proclaimed a "Biosphere" by the U.S. Congress in 1976 under UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization).

This project tries to investigate a problem which only recently was presented as a threat to the biodiversity of the CNF- The invasion of Stray Dogs and Cats in the CNF "El Yunque", as it is known locally.

Puerto Ricos' CNF is the 1st. U.S. Forest that states this as an "Official Issue", according to Felipe Cano the CNF-Forest Biologist. He explained that basically in other U.S. Forests the public in the surrounding communities of the forests, have been educated regarding "forest ethics". Most of the communities that border the forests have County Shelters which serve these areas.

Also a State Agency is available- as a backup, to help if a problem should arise regarding a stray animal. For this reason, at present only our CNF is faced with this unusual problem- how to deal with the domestic animals (dogs and cats) which are entering or being abandoned in the forest.

Problem: The invasion of Stray Animals (dogs and cats -exotic species) in our CNF-Caribbean National Forest.

There may be various reasons, but mainly due to the ever increasing construction of housing near and on the periphery (buffer zone) of the CNF- a stray animal problem now exists in the CNF. On January 3-6 of 2005 at the National Centennial Congress in Washington, the Official Reports of the Tropical Forestry Congress (held August of 2004 in Puerto Rico) were submitted.

Of the various issues which were discussed, for the first time it was presented "officially" that "Domestic Animals exotic to the forest (such as dogs and cats) need to be kept away from the Forest. The government should provide for shelters to address this issue".

We agree that this new situation is a threat to the biodiversity of the Forest and to the health of the many citizens and tourists alike which frequent this famous recreational area.

Problem: The invasion of Stray Animals (dogs and cats -exotic species) in our CNF-Caribbean National Forest.

Research Question- Would this Dog/Cat Stray Problem of the CNF be eliminated if Regional Animal Shelters were established to service the Communities surrounding the periphery of the CNF?

HYPOTHESIS

We think that the establishing of Regional Animal Shelters to service the communities surrounding the periphery of the CNF, will help to eliminate the “Stray Dog and Cat Problem” of our CNF in a humane way. Of course Humane Animal Education and Forest Ethics (in our schools and communities) needs to accompany this effort to better insure its’ success.

Objectives:

We will use the following methods to attempt and establish “the stray animal situation in the CNF” as a problem, also to justify our concern regarding this.

Methods:

- 1) We will submit graphs
 - a. From the CNF, showing the rate of capture success during 2001-2003.
 - b. Submit at least (4) sightings – to observe the quantity of strays seen during these visits and submit their graphs.
- 2) Interview (4) people
 - Mr. Felipe Cano- CNF Forest Biologist
 - Mr. Alfredo Figueroa- Pres. Pare Este, Inc.
 - Mrs. Aino Kolk Perez- Pres. GALA Inc.
 - Mrs. Diana de Ju- Pres. (LIGA) Liga Conciencia Ambiental del Este , Inc.
- 3) a. Submit a Questionnaire- in which 40 people participated (20 adults and 20 students).
b. Also submit sample graphs of Questionnaire results.
- 4) Submit a Petition- taken after a Humane Education Class, recently presented to 3rd. students at the Ramon Quinones Pacheco elementary school. Expressing their interest and concern regarding the stray situation in the Forest.
- 5) Submit: Humane Education materials, information and Letters from groups that share this stray concern. Also the Lex Juris of new Law #427 passed in Sept. '04- that amended Law #36 and Law #242.

JUSTIFICATION

Our CNF-Caribbean National Forest has presented (for the first time) as an Official Issue, the problem of stray domestic animals (dogs and cats) within the forest. They go on to state that the gov't. should provide shelters to address this issue. Due to the fact that now there are so many homes surrounding our CNF, and each house usually keeps a pet (dog or cat), for company or maybe for protection. Lately many of these pets (or their litter), are not wanted after awhile. So they are being abandoned (unlawfully) near or within the CNF.

We believe that Regional Shelters should be built to service the communities that surround the periphery of the forest-one on the Naguabo side and another near the Rio Grande-Luquillo area etc. In this way the citizens would have an alternative (since many can't afford to pay the usual Veterinary fees) to bring their "unwanted" dogs or cats to a "low-cost" shelter. Here these animals would always be accepted and usually placed for adoption. Unless they're in bad shape, then they could be euthanized in a humane way.

Our government should be more aware of this situation and prevent this growing disaster, while still possible. Many citizens are just not aware of the situation that is being created in the forest, by the growing problem of strays being thrown there. The teaching of (Humane Animal Education and Forest Ethics) in the schools and communities will help the efforts of shelters- to attract citizens so they can "bring in" the animals and not just "dump them" anywhere. As stated before, other US Forests don't present this as a problem because they have many Shelters for their counties and the back-up of gov't. agencies when strays are found or animals are no longer wanted.

There is still a chance to correct this growing problem. Our citizens and young people need to become more sensitive to this situation. Also it will stop the negative sights of sickly, hungry and sad looking stray animals, especially in our unique "El Yunque" Forest!

Conclusion

We submit this science project with the hope that this very dangerous situation in the CNF will be dealt with as soon as possible; before the over population of these animals grows out of hand.

The Biodiversity of our Forest is at stake here, also the humane treatment of animals. We wish that the children of P.R. and the communities will become aware of this problem. Also that the government will intercede to help

Thank you very much!