

**In Search of a Sustainable Palm:
Progress & Work Plan,
2004-2005**

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CONTENTS

- I. RECENT PROGRESS**
- II. WORKING GROUPS:**
 - 1. SUSTAINABLE HARVEST AND PROCESSING GUIDELINES & CERTIFICATION**
 - 2. FAIR TRADE GUIDELINES & CERTIFICATION**
 - 3. SUPPLY**
 - 4. DEMAND / MARKETING / OUTREACH & COMMUNICATIONS**
 - 5. CHAIN OF CUSTODY**
- III. TIMELINE**
- IV. PROJECT OVERVIEW REVISITED**
- V. PARTICIPANT CONTACT LIST**

I. RECENT PROGRESS

On May 20, we held our first conference call to discuss the sustainable palm harvest and processing guidelines as well as the challenges of management and fair trade certification. We were fortunate to have the participation of Charlotte Opal (TransFair USA), Sarah Ford (Lutheran World Relief), Jim Everett (Continental Greens), Bryan Endress (Oregon State University), Maren Peterson, a cultural geographer who has agreed to assist with the complex socio-cultural issues related to palm harvesting, and Ivan Zuniga, an individual with excellent experience in media and communications in Mexico. Unfortunately, there were some difficulties with those trying to participate from Mexico and Guatemala. We apologize to those that tried to connect but were unable to. Coordination of a toll-free, international conference call has proven to be more difficult than expected, and we are working to ensure that everyone interested will be able to participate in future calls.

Five groups were established during the call corresponding to the five main tasks outlined in the original planning document (see section IV). Because participation in the call was not 100%, ***we need and encourage individuals interested in particular areas to contact the individuals listed below under each task group in order to coordinate your efforts.***

There are presently two graduate students who will be doing their thesis research on the *Chamaedorea* palms in Mexico and Guatemala. Vanessa Zajfen from Iowa State who is presently in Oaxaca initiating her research and Angel Sol, who is studying at CATIE in Costa Rica and who is presently working out the details of his research plan which will compare palm production in Guatemala and Mexico. We are very lucky to have both of the students collaborating with our work as they will be researching important issues related to the certification of palms.

Dave Wilsey will be in charge of coordination of the Task Groups and will be coordinating with the group representatives/coordinators to develop plans and follow-up on those plans as well as supporting those groups in any way he can.

Please contact Dean Current (curre002@umn.edu) or David Wilsey (wils0361@comcast.net) if you have questions, language barriers, or difficulty contacting the individuals listed.

II. WORKING GROUPS

SUSTAINABLE HARVEST AND PROCESSING: GUIDELINES AND CERTIFICATION

Bryan Endress, Bryan.Endress@oregonstate.edu
George Dyer, gdyer@primal.ucdavis.edu
Others...

Objectives:

- Develop guidelines for the sustainable harvest of the palms.
- Implement certification of *Chamaedorea* palm harvest and processing practices for sale to congregations in the United States.

Activities

1. Coordinate Guidelines for Sustainable Harvest
 - A. What we know from the Guatemala community concessions:
Guatemala has communities that have received or are in the process of receiving Smartwood certification for palm harvest and have also initiated training for processing the palms in the communities including setting up direct links to palm importers in the USA.
 - i. Ecosystem descriptions
 - ii. Forest species inventories
 - iii. Mapping of multiple-use / harvesting / conservation zones
 - iv. *Chamaedorea* spp. biology data
 - v. Monitoring
 - vi. Smartwood guidelines and certification of palm harvesting.
 - B. Regional differences (Mexico) from the Guatemala experience
 - C. Guidelines and training / sanctions for non-compliance
 - D. Develop a timeline
 - E. Determine costs

Information Requirements & Responsibilities

1. We need to obtain the Rainforest Alliance / SmartWood NTFP certification guidelines developed for the Guatemalan community concessions;
2. We need to consolidate all available research related to palm ecology and sustainable harvest. There have been several studies by Researchers in Mexican and US institutions that need to be reviewed.
3. We need to develop a plan of action with dates and responsibilities for developing the guidelines and defining research needs and possibly coordinating those research needs with graduate students.

FAIR TRADE GUIDELINES AND CERTIFICATION

Charlotte Opal, Charlotte@transfairusa.org

Sarah Ford, sford@lwr.org

Others...

Objectives:

- Develop guidelines for the fair trade of palms.
- Implement certification of *Chamaedorea* palm trade practices for sale to congregations in the United States.

Activities

1. Coordinate Fair Trade Certification [Guatemala & Mexico]
 - A. Socio-economic inventory requirements:
 - i. Population demographics
 - ii. Livelihood strategies
 - B. Establish / verify democratic decision-making processes
 - C. Establish / verify modes of equitable benefits distribution
 - D. Define monitoring system to be used
 - E. Institutional / technical / market training
 - F. Develop a timeline
 - G. Determine costs

Information Requirements & Responsibilities

1. We need to obtain the TransFair fair trade certification guidelines for use as a road map.
2. We need to start preparing certification guidelines as soon as possible based upon the Transfair guidelines.
3. We need to prepare a plan of action with dates and responsibilities to achieve the Transfair Fair Trade certification.

SUPPLY

Bryan Endress, Bryan.Endress@oregonstate.edu

Others... .

Objective

- Develop partnerships with communities in Guatemala and Mexico to secure a stable supply of certified (sustainable harvest and fair trade) *Chamaedorea* palm for sale to denominations and churches in the United States and Europe interested in supporting trade that improves socio-economic and environmental conditions.

Activities

1. Establish a list of participating communities / ejidos;
2. Acquire current *Chamaedorea spp.* inventories by community / ejido;
3. Determine potential harvest estimates by species based on sustainability standards;
4. Acquire actual annual harvest / sale by species in previous year(s);
5. Develop a system of demand allocation (quotas) among communities based on current inventories, estimates for harvest, and actual previous harvest/sale;
6. Develop educational / training materials to share with communities that outline the details relating to the creation of a certified palm market (i.e. demand-driven markets)
 - a. Opportunity A: Sale of a percentage of total harvest at a premium through Fair Trade certification
 - b. Opportunity B: Potential for the percentage of total harvest sold at a premium to increase as annual demand increases

Note: It will be extremely important to make it clear to all communities involved that we will not be able to purchase their entire harvest at fair trade prices. Those purchases will be allotted to communities on an equitable basis.

Information Requirements & Responsibilities

1. In this area we will need to determine those communities interested and able to participate. An important issue will be the equitable allocation of demand amongst the participating communities. This will depend to a large extent on the capacity for harvest as defined by the Sustainable Harvest and Processing guidelines.
2. We need to get inventories of existing areas of palm production under natural forest conditions and their potential level of production. Several organizations have mentioned that they have this information and the Guatemala communities have developed the information as part of the certification process. We would ask that all groups who have that information send it to Dave Wilsey as soon as possible.
3. Develop a plan of action with tasks, dates and responsibilities.

DEMAND / MARKETING / OUTREACH & COMMUNICATIONS

Maren Peterson, mbpete@eoni.com
Sarah Ford, sford@lwr.org
David Wilsey, wils0361@comcast.net
Ivan Zúñiga, izuniga@eambiental.org
Others...

Objective

- Develop partnerships with committed and potential demand sources of demand for certified (sustainable harvest and fair trade) *Chamaedorea* palm from Guatemala and Mexico within the church communities of the United States and Europe.

Activities

1. Define the group of denominations and congregations committed to purchasing certified palms for Palm Sunday, 2005
2. Develop a list of denominations and congregations interested in purchasing certified palms (those not necessarily committed to participating this year)
3. Develop a list of denominations and congregations interested in purchasing certified palms throughout the year
4. Develop a comprehensive consumer education and marketing program related to sustainable harvest and fair trade (top-down and bottom-up):
 - a. Denomination-level (Certified palm project brochure)
 - b. Congregation-level (Brochure, poster, and presentation)
 - c. Parishioner-level (Bulletin insert)
5. Develop an advertising strategy focusing on peak and off-peak markets
 - a. Print media
 - b. Website
6. Consider church delegation requirements (community visits)

Information Requirements & Responsibilities

1. Maren Peterson has volunteered to coordinate the development of a marketing plan for the certified palms. She will be working very closely with Sarah Ford to develop that plan.
2. Develop a plan of action for communication certification program to churches.
3. We need to keep in mind that we may not have the certification in place by next Palm Sunday so we may need to include in the literature that all communities are committed to certified production and are in the process of meeting fair trade and sustainable production certification requirements.

CHAIN OF CUSTODY

Charlotte Opal, Charlotte@transfairusa.org

Jim Everett, jim@cfg-greens.com

Others...

Objective

- Establish a transparent and certifiable chain of custody from the individual harvesters and communities to churches.

Activities

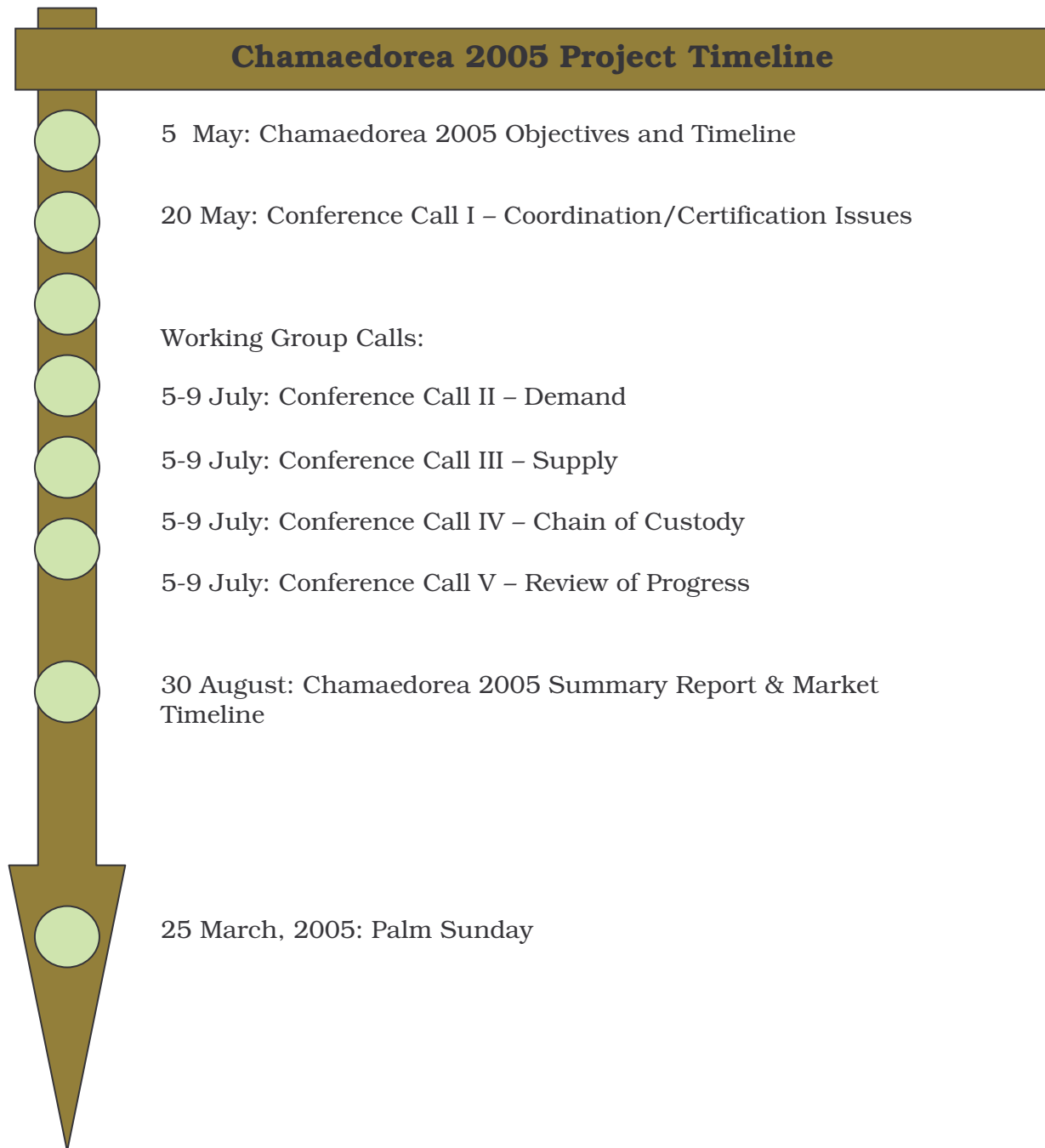
1. Chain of Custody Mapping
 - a. Community / Forest
 - b. International
 - c. Domestic
2. Training and Education
 - a. Harvesters
 - i. Quantity and selective harvest
 - ii. Quality
 - iii. Monitoring / Recording
 - b. Processors
 - i. Selection
 - ii. Packaging
 - iii. Monitoring / Recording
 - c. Handlers / Shippers
 - i. Labelling
 - ii. Packaging
 - iii. Monitoring / Recording
 - d. Vendors

Information Requirements & Responsibilities

1. Charlotte Opal is aware of the Chain of Custody requirements of Fair Trade and will be working with Jim Everett to define the chain of custody and how that needs to be certified.
2. We need a plan with dates and responsibilities for certifying the chain of custody. This is something that could be coordinated by Dave Wilsey with Charlotte and Jim if that would be preferred.

III. TIMELINE

Below is a suggested timeline that would be used to move forward with different groups working on different aspects of the certification of Chamaedorea Palms. Because of available resources, we would like to move ahead through the summer to make sure we have the mechanisms in place for a sale in 2005 and well coordinated supply and demand for that sale.



IV. PROJECT OVERVIEW REVISITED

Introduction

We have been moving ahead with efforts to certify and sell sustainably harvested fair trade palm to Christian congregations as a first step in promoting the sale of sustainably harvested palms through retailers in North America and Europe as a means to promote forest and palm conservation and improve the livelihoods of the communities gathering the palms. CINRAM at the University of Minnesota will be leading this effort and David Wilsey who worked on the original market study has been hired to work on this effort. David will probably be taking care of setting up meetings and keeping everyone informed as we move ahead with these efforts. He is recently back from the Peace Corps in Ecuador and brings some good experience in Mexico and Ecuador to the effort. We are hoping all of you will be able to work with us as you all are in a unique position to assist with the efforts at the forest, processing and transport or church level. We greatly appreciate all of your assistance provided so far and hope to keep you involved.

This document provides a preliminary framework/plan to help guide us through this effort with the goal of selling certified/labeled palms for the 2005 Easter season. We hope to receive input from all of you on the plan and your potential participation in it and will be scheduling a conference call to get this effort started.

Overarching Objectives

- Promote the conservation of natural forests, the sustainable management of *Chamaedorea* palms, and improved local livelihoods through the certification of palm management and sale of the palm through a certified-fair trade label.
- Implement certification of harvesting, management and, trade practices for *Chamaedorea* palms originating in Guatemala and Mexico for sale to church congregations in the United States and Europe.

Guatemala

Several forest-community concessions have been identified and are presently working toward certification through Rainforest Alliance Smartwood program. These communities are presently certified for sustainable harvest practices through the Forest Stewardship Council's (FSC) *Smartwood* program. Thus, palms originating from the Guatemalan community concessions may be marketed via green marketing channels. Our objective in Guatemala would be to complete the requisite activities in order to add the complementary socio-economic (Fair Trade) label. The percentage of the harvest that will benefit from this additional certification will be determined by the level of demand generated by the congregations / churches. Fair trade certification, will grant access to a potentially higher fair-trade price, in a potentially expanding market.

Mexico

Several organizations in Mexico have expressed interest in working on the certification. At present, the government of Mexico provides some oversight on palm harvesting. Conservation International is working with several groups that harvest palms. Rene Ochoa is working with Conservation International. George Dyer and Bryan Endress have worked with Mexican palm harvesting communities and we have other connections to communities there but we will need to identify communities with whom we want to work there and determine how much they can supply.

The 5 main tasks which we will need to address as we prepare for the certification and sale of palms:

- **SUSTAINABLE HARVEST AND PROCESSING GUIDELINES:** Starting at the forest and community level we need to define guidelines for the harvest and processing of the palms trying to avoid discarding up to 50% of the palms collected as has been known to happen in the past. This will include guidelines on the number of fronds that can be harvested from a plant and the length of time between one harvest and the next. In addition guidelines and training will be needed to properly select and handle the palms.
- **DEFINING CERTIFICATION GUIDELINES:** The harvesting and processing guidelines along with the monitoring of palm populations will form the basis of the certification. Harvesting guidelines will ensure sustainable harvest while handling guidelines will help guarantee the quality of the product that enters the market and minimize the number of fronds discarded.
- **SUPPLY CONSIDERATIONS RELATING TO CERTIFICATION OF XATE PALM:** In order to develop the palm market and ensure we have enough certified palm to meet the demand will require understanding how much natural forest grown palm can be supplied from the interested communities. This will require working with the communities interested to define the amount and type of palm they can provide to the market. This will require some kind of inventory of existing palm populations. This is a technical issue that will require field work with the communities.
- **DEMAND / MARKETING CONSIDERATIONS RELATING TO CERTIFICATION OF XATE PALM:** Just as understanding the potential supply of certified palm from the communities is important, we must also have a good idea of demand from Congregations and, because of the need to coordinate the supply from communities with the demand from churches we are hoping to get commitments from churches early so we are not promising too much to communities and so that we can coordinate the harvest and delivery as smoothly as possible. This will require getting the information out to churches and their leaders and coordinating the ordering of the palms. Our partners in church organizations will be important to this effort and coming up with a certification and message that is attractive to them and a certification that is acceptable to them.

- **CHAIN OF CUSTODY CONSIDERATIONS RELATING TO CERTIFICATION OF XATE PALM:** Once the orders from churches have been received and the communities identified that will supply the palm, we will need to coordinate the harvest and delivery of the palm to the congregations. We recently met with Jim Everett of Continental Floral Greens (CFG) in Guatemala and discussed working with CFG on the sale. Jim is interested and suggested that the orders come through his retailers and wholesalers and that we attach a label during the selection process that would identify the palm as certified and also the community or region of origin. They have done that in the past and it would add very little cost. Part of this process will also include fixing a price for the palm and deciding how the communities will receive the additional income from the certified palm. This work will have to be coordinated with CFG, retailers and wholesalers, churches and the communities providing the palms.

Additional information:

- Dean Current of the University of Minnesota, Abraham Guillen of TREES/Rainforest Alliance and representatives from the NGO NPV and Guatemalan communities met with Jim Everett of Continental Floral Greens (CFG) in Guatemala City in April to discuss a pilot sale from the communities to CFG and how we might structure future sales to congregations. Jim Everett is willing and interested in working with us and will be a key link needed to move palms between the forests in Guatemala and Mexico and congregations. NPV is developing a training program for harvesters and processors with the objective of promoting sustainable harvest and processing a quality palm with a minimum of palms discarded due to poor quality.
- Communities in the Guatemalan Peten are receiving certification from Smartwood for sustainable harvest of palms which will provide a good model that may be applied elsewhere or provide guidelines for other certification schemes. They are working closely with the NGO Naturaleza para la Vida (NPV) and Smartwood/TREES to organize the communities for local processing and more direct sales under a sustainable harvesting program.

V. PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

(See earlier draft for complete contact information; please contact Dave Wilsey if information is incomplete or incorrect; or if you are not listed)

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