

## Appendix F-6b

### Monthly Field Activity Report

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Report for Month of: November, 2005

#### **Summary of Activities and Results**

The watershed model of the Barreira Grande was completed during the reporting period. The model was painted, fitted with sides and a lid, garnished with landmark features and local vegetation, and made waterproof with several protective coats of varnish. The construction continued to be highly participative with local youth volunteers, who participated and developed a presentation of the model for the surrounding communities. The project has provided informal education and improved awareness and understanding of the local environment in a watershed context, as well as providing a venue for improved literacy, English language training, and improved knowledge about Canada. Youth were involved in peer training on the environmental issues by presenting the model to their peers, school groups, and the community - a process that should now continue. The transfer of the watershed model approach to education has been successfully transferred to Brasil.

#### **Results of participative youth training and community involvement:**

In the month of November, learning progressed from how a watershed functions to the role of native vegetation in reducing erosion and promoting a healthy waterway. The youth increased their knowledge and literacy of the environment through presentations and discussions of problems and solutions. Behaviours became focused on the environmental concerns, and discussions revolved around ecological health issues associated with residential and industrial activities. During the final stages of construction, visits continued from schools such as Ermiro de Morais Municipal school (40 youth), the Agente Jovens (60 youth), as well as the leader of the Agente Jovens and the secretary of Education.

Guidance for the development of the presentation material was provided while the volunteers made the ultimate decision on what to present. To facilitate discussions on local environmental concerns, a second tour of the watershed was carried out to assist the youth in confirming their thoughts and previous observations regarding pollution concerns. Accompanying the review of the original concerns there were three (3) workshops, and five (5) practice sessions done prior to the formal presentation. Nine (9) volunteers, of whom seven (7) were female, presented the watershed model at a launching hosted by the Municipality of Três Marias on November 07, 2005.

The launching of the watershed model was attended by over 150 people (approx. 80 youth, 40 female, 30 male). The Municipality of Três Marias hosted the initial watershed launch. The Mayor's office issued invitations, and display panels consisting of pictures of volunteers constructing the model were created. It was considered most appropriate to have the support of the municipality and allow for the Mayor's office to send the invitations. This allowed the local municipality a feeling of possession over the event and provided an opportunity for them to consider providing assistance for future projects.

The launching brought together local residents, youth groups, schools, politicians, bureaucrats, business leaders and NGOs. The event included participants from both sides of the river, including representatives from the municipalities of Três Marias and São Gonçalo de Abaeté. After the launching, participants commented on how empowering the event was. For example, a teacher from Beiro Rio commented how proud she was of her former students' ability to present and discuss the watershed. This method of delivery was interactive and very successful in bringing together various players positively, thus addressing the goals of the PPAgua project.

Furthermore, the media provided distribution of the information to the general public. During the month of October the local television station aired an interview with Barbara Johnsen, two of the youth, and myself. A follow-up to the news story occurred at the launching on November 7<sup>th</sup>, when a 15-minute news story on the launching of the watershed featured interviews with a number of stakeholders including: the mayor, local youth, a representative of the Fisherman's Federation, and a WFT employee. As well, after the launching, the municipality provided support for this initiative by transporting the youth to present the watershed model at the FestiVelhas.

At FestiVelhas, a room was provided by the Manuelzão project and several presentations were made to the public. A group of teachers attending a workshop took a keen interest in the model. Links were made and strengthened with representatives from the Manuelzão project. They filmed, and photographed the presenters, and offered to interview Sarah and myself. I encouraged Sarah to take the youth to the interview in which they received more credit for their hard work.

### **Difficulties**

#### *Incompatibility of styrofoam with varnish:*

As the styrofoam used in Canada for construction was not found in Brazil, a local alternative was employed. However, it was found that the varnish normally used to waterproof the model dissolved this styrofoam. The problem was resolved by applying a protective coat of plaster over the entire surface of the model. This made for additional work during the construction of the walls and lid of the model - the week prior to the launching of the watershed model. During this stage the Municipality of Três Marias made tools and shop space available, and allowed flexibility in the carpenter's (Edson's) schedule so that he could assist with the final touches in time for the launching.

#### *Organizational communication:*

Some problems of organizational communication have been encountered between WFT and the rest of the team since the initial launching. For example, at a moment when the team was preparing to repair the model, it was discovered that a school class of approximately 50 students had been waiting at the gates of the watershed hall in the Banco do Brasil for over an hour. Luckily Marcelo Braga was available for interpretation and translation, and a successful impromptu learning experience evolved. However, later in the day it was discovered that the Secretary of Education was also left waiting at the gates to volunteer and assist with the watershed model. No long-term negative impacts were created by the occasion, but a better understanding is clearly needed amongst the team of how to set schedules, who sets them and makes commitments, and what expectations exist within these commitments.

## **Observations**

Literacy and effective communication on environmental issues was accomplished amongst the volunteers by engaging the community with presentations about their watershed. It was evident amongst the participants that there were many gaps in knowledge concerning how business and residential actions, or inactions have an effect on the health of a watershed. The informal education within the community provided a better awareness of local environmental issues amongst community members, the Agente Jovens and several elementary school classes. This has enhanced the social support programs such as the Agente Jovens. Eight (8) of the nine (9) principal youth volunteering for the activity are connected to fishing families. It has also provided opportunities for fishing families to address environmental issues that appear to have been lost in the process of change.

Short-term economic interests, not conservation, are the local priority, resulting in resource abuse rather than sustainability. The building of the watershed model created a dialogue of values not currently integrated into the local economic system. These values were very well received. The number of enthusiastic youth eager to participate considerably surpassed the level of youth participation in Canada. This was probably due to the high level of community involvement in the construction phase, which allows the youth to develop ownership of the model and confidence in its presentation. This process could well be transferred back to Canada for enhanced impacts of watershed models there.

## **Next steps and Recommendations**

The plan at present is to continue with presentations of the watershed model in several more communities.

Planning and scheduling for the next phase of the work, involving a teacher's workshop and the creation of a second watershed model, is currently being discussed. During this time it is thought that community presentations should continue at the following locations:

- Tres Marias/Sao Gonçalo de Abaeté (Beiro Rio)
- Buritizeiro/Pirapora
- Guaicui/Ibiai/Votorantins Metais

The watershed model should be used as much as possible to enhance environmental awareness, both in Três Marias and other communities. While it is not in use in schools or on the road, the model could be left at industrial locations such as Votorantins for a period of a week at a time. During this time, scheduled presentations could occur. Furthermore, the watershed model should be used as a tool to support other educational initiatives such as bio mapping.