

Remarks
Ambassador D. Brent Hardt
to the
Graduation Ceremony for Staff of the Guyana Forestry
Commission
Thursday, June 7, 2012
Guyana Forestry Commission

Chair

Honourable Minister of Natural Resources and the Environment

Commissioner of the GFC

Colleagues

Graduates and Staff of the GFC

Other invitees

On behalf of the United States Government and the U.S. Agency for International Development, I am pleased to be here today to mark another important step forward in enhancing Guyana's ability to administer and manage its vast forest resources. I am also pleased to be able to highlight the completion of another effective partnership between Guyana and the United States that, like the trees of the forest, has taken root and is now bearing fruit.

I understand that this training represents the culmination of a partnership that began back in 2007, when representatives of the United

States Forest Service (USFS) traveled to Guyana to explore opportunities for developing cooperation for sustainable forest management activities. An agreement was forged in 2008 to support the Guyana Forest Commission's (GFC) mandate to administer and manage state forest lands. A work plan was developed with stakeholders in January 2010 and, to implement it, USAID funded a long-term expert on Geographical Information Systems and Remote Sensing to train over 30 staff of the Guyana Forestry Commission and its sister agencies in topics such as Introduction to Remote Sensing, Geographical Information Systems (GIS) Fundamentals and Advanced Geographical Information Systems. This training was targeted to assist Guyana in meeting its obligations under the REDD+ initiative. The training, conducted over the past year, concluded on May 30. It encompassed four primary areas:

- I. Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) Monitoring, Reporting and Verification System (MRVS) and components of conducting a National Forest Inventory (NFI)
- II. Establishing a Code of Practice (COP) for timber operations & Reviewing the Lacey Act

III. Expanding the use of Lesser Used Species to reduce stresses on primary species and,

IV. Implementing a community Forest Fire Management Strategy.

We understand from our colleagues in the Guyana Forestry Commission that this training initiative has already had a positive impact on their operations by expediting their workflow, improving data development and data management procedures, and boosting the GFC's confidence in moving forward with the technical components of the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+). As a result of this advanced expertise, the GFC has accelerated expansion plans for their Geographical Information System Unit. The GIS Specialist has in turn trained staff at the University of Guyana with the hope that this will generate a steady flow of Geographical Information Systems/Remote Sensing (GIS/RS) graduates to agencies that require these technical skills.

In the area of the Monitoring, Reporting and Verification Systems and the National Forest Inventory, the GFC has been collaborating with a leading Biometrician and Senior Scientist of the U.S. Forest Service

who was also made available under the USAID/USFS Agreement to develop the parameters and methodology for the critical National Forest Inventory. This training effort also produced some unique training resources, including manuals that can be used for future training efforts to enhance the capacity of the GFC staff to manage complex carbon monitoring systems. So overall, it has been a partnership of breadth and depth that has helped to strengthen Guyana's capacity to manage its unique forestry resources.

I would like to recognize the commitment of the Minister of Natural Resources and the Environment to this effort and to working in partnership with the United States. I would also like to thank the Guyana Forestry Commission's senior management for its collaborative spirit and for making its staff available to participate in this training partnership. I would also like to recognize the outstanding work of USAID and the U.S. Forest Service in providing the resources and personnel to bolster the capacity of the Guyana Forestry Commission. I would especially like to thank the instructor, Mr. John Kerkering, for dedicating himself to this effort over the past year.

Finally, I would especially like to recognize the trainees who will be receiving certificates here today. Thirty staff from the GFC will receive certificates: 18 in Geographical Information Systems (GIS) Fundamentals, 7 in Advanced Geographical Information System, and 5 in Remote Sensing. Congratulations to all of you!

Guyana has one of the world's largest and best preserved expanses of tropical rain forest. While this is a tremendous resource, it also needs to be carefully monitored and protected so that it can continue to support the wonderfully rich biodiversity, contribute to the climate cycle, and provide sustainable livelihood for generations to come. Today we find ourselves at the end of a long and fruitful process that will contribute to this effort.

It is our hope that Guyana is now in a better position with this cadre of trained professionals. I wish you all the best.