CNG – The Energy, Ecosystems and Livelihoods Initiative – what does it mean for you?
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Discussion summary

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The reasons why IUCN is engaging in the energy debate should be highlighted.

Energy has been pushed up onto the agenda because of climate change. Security, both physically and geophysically, of energy supply has raised gas and oil prices, driving investment into alternative energy sources. Any energy choice will impact on ecosystems, even those that are portrayed as “green”, e.g. fast growing crops for biofuels or wind turbines. One potential example is “methane clathrate” – large deposits (8-10 times larger than oil deposits) of trapped methane deposits under ice, which will escalate climate change if they escape, but may also represent a potential, alternative fuel!

Biodiversity, including abiotic, provide solutions to the energy problems. Energy equity is also a key issue. We need to go into areas where we have credibility (which became particularly clear after 1 hr with the Norwegian Minister of International Development. Firstly, we need to generate credibility, and secondly, we work with other who do have credibility, e.g. Consumers International. Otherwise, there is danger of mission creep.

The new programme has 5 components – climate change, energy, poverty & security, green economy/markets and biodiversity/ecosystems. We need to use knowledge on biodiversity to influence positive policies of the other 4 areas, and vice versa, to bring added value to IUCN.

Our vision?
IUCN should consider a vision for what we want an energy future to look like in 2020. For example, Shell (who conduct many scenarios) are considering how they can use their 40,000+ petrol stations to market renewable technologies to individual householders, creating local energy markets.

Equity should be high on IUCN’s energy agenda, as poor people pay more for services such as water and energy.

Genetic modification may pose a problem with some members as and when GM energy feedstock is promoted for their potential efficiency (such as low lignin trees in China). Apparently, some members now support GM for non-food crops.

The purpose of the Leverage Initiatives should be for forward thinking, away from the “usual” scenario. This Initiative represents an opportunity to create new partnerships and shape the membership.

Focus and entry points – what does IUCN bring to the energy debate?
The current focal areas for 2007 (energy equity, biofuels and oil & gas) are not “forward thinking” and consider only supply-side issues. Should we consider working on energy consumption?

The focal areas have been identified as IUCN already has a successful history in related areas. As we are new to the energy debate, we must use these areas as an entry point into the energy discussions and focus on areas where we have proven competence. For other areas such as energy consumption, we can work with partners such as Consumers International. That said, energy efficiency underlies all the focal areas – i.e. there’s no point in producing extra biofuels just to fill the tanks of inefficient cars in the USA. As we are a conservation organisation, perhaps we can promote “energy conservation”. This is easy for our members to push on a local scale.

However, if we want to push energy efficiency, we also have to be seen as energy efficient ourselves, e.g. through an energy efficient new building, or by our travel and reducing carbon emissions.

Linking across the thematic programmes
Andrea and Nadine are not working on a new “Energy programme” on their own; moreover, the idea is for “us” (i.e. the Union) to work on energy issues, coordinated by the Initiative.
E.g. We could use the conservation and management of ecosystems expertise in WCPA to promote corridors or buffers for biofuel feedstock. Even recommend energy efficient facilities in parks.

For biofuels, a forward-looking (not reactive) strategic environmental assessment should be promoted.

Also, wood fuels burnt by poor people creates health problems though the indoor air pollution – the technology is the problem, wood fuel isn’t. In fact, it is potentially renewable so we should encourage its use to be safer and more ecological.

The work itself will be a balance between global policy work and local/field level work – you need to understand the changing context on the ground in order to promote effective policies.

**Continuing the discussion**

This CNG was an introduction to the Energy Initiative. Thank you to everyone’s contributions. If you have any questions or suggestions, please email andrea.athanas@iucn.org or Nadine.mccormick@iucn.org.