

Impact Spotlight

Chyulu Hills REDD+ Project Q1 2023

**EVER
LAND**

**CONSERVATION
INTERNATIONAL**





SPOTLIGHT SUMMARY

With the increasing likelihood of more frequent and extreme droughts due to climate change and the associated risk to the forest, the Chyulu Hills REDD+ Project (CHRP) partners have developed a plan for preventing, monitoring, and quickly responding to fire outbreaks in the area. In addition to the impacts on both humans and wildlife, fire is also one of the key threats to the carbon stocks on which the success of the Chyulu Hills REDD+ Project depends. The risk from fire can only be expected to increase in the face of higher temperatures and more extreme droughts that are predicted as a result of climate change. However, with the right equipment, training, and collaboration with local communities, it is possible to decrease risks from fire and preserve the integrity of the fragile Chyulu ecosystem.

Designed through a consultative process, the project's fire management program (FMP) provides comprehensive recommendations for drastically improving the capacity of the REDD+ project partners to reduce the risk of fire and to prevent, detect and respond to fire effectively and efficiently. Community outreach, sufficient equipment and improved infrastructure also enhances the overall protection of the Chyulu Hills ecosystem.





KEY ACTIVITIES

Having an effective fire management system is important to both the local community and project partners. Fire is a natural component of East African savanna and woodland systems and has also been used traditionally by the Maasai to burn grassland in the dry season to promote the growth of fresh more nutritious grass for livestock. However, fire does pose a potential threat to the cloud forest and excessively frequent fires also threaten the lower elevation grasslands, acacia woodland and lava forests in the project area. By implementing effective FMP activities, it creates an opportunity for the project to further educate and collaborate with the local community for long term use of the land and protection.

FIRE PREVENTION ACTIVITIES



Community outreach,
education & law enforcement



Fire breaks &
other earth works



Surveillance &
monitoring fire response



Training on fire prevention
& mitigation measures



Communications
& coordination



Aerial fire-fighting
capability



Ground equipment, operations
& infrastructure



Vegetation restoration
& rehabilitation





MILESTONES

In 2022, The Project Office (PO) procured new fire fighting equipment for the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), Maasai Wilderness Conservation Trust (MWCT), Big Life Foundation (BLF), and Sheldrick Wildlife Trust (SWT), which included: sleeping bags, roll mats, Eureka tents, head torches, haversacks, heavy duty overalls, cape ponchos, safety boots, several assorted cutlery, mess tins, military water bottles, jugs, slashers, spotlights, camel bags, binoculars, head lamps, gloves, goggles, face shields, helmets, and fire beaters.

Furthermore, also in 2022, an 80 km firebreak was completed within Kuku Group Ranch and a 183 km firebreak completed in Chyulu Hills National Park. A total of 48 rangers from several partners also received a refresher training workshop on fire fighting and management.





CURRENT NEWS

The ongoing drought in Kenya has increased the frequency and severity of forest fires in the Chyulu Hills. In 2022, the PO hired an Air Tractor for 60 days to help fight fires within the project area and constructed an enclosure with 5 water tanks - a water collection point strategically located for ease of access and quick response by the Air Tractor. In Q3, the Air Tractor responded to 15 fires. A total of 38.7 flight hours were covered, 105 flights were made dropping water onto fires, and a total of 216,500 liters of water dropped. In Q4, the Air Tractor responded to 14 fires, together with partners (MWCT, KWS, BLF, and SWT). A total of 97 flight hours were covered, including the longest flight taken on Oct 24th, with the air tractor flying for a total of 11.3 hours.

During the first quarter of 2023, the project held a CHRP Board meeting to showcase and discuss the CHRP Fire Analysis of the burned areas and fire reports and response activities and challenges. In the meeting they also discussed important next steps, including efforts to centralize communication between partners during fires, improve aerial surveillance and monitoring, enhance the outreach program throughout the community, and production of educational materials for community members.





THE FUTURE

A wide-angle photograph of a lush green landscape. In the foreground, a single, gnarled tree stands on a grassy slope. The middle ground shows rolling green hills and valleys, with a small body of water visible in the distance. The sky is a vibrant blue, filled with large, white, fluffy clouds. The overall scene is bright and clear, suggesting a sunny day.

Some of the next steps illustrated above are central to the project's implementation for the next few months. The CHRP team is continuing their fire analysis steps to map and identify burned areas, and perform accurate assessments. In the longer term, the project plans to have streamlined outreach programs and school workshops, scaled up fire breaks, expanded ranger training, improved firefighting ranger equipment and increased the frequency of aerial support and ground surveillance coverage via the community. Furthermore, the project hopes to have an even more sophisticated cross-partner fire response effort in place, resulting in an improved understanding within communities on the importance of not starting fires, and ultimately less damaging and frequent fires breaking out both in the Chyulu Hills project area and throughout the wider landscape.