

## Final Evaluation Report

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Your Details	
<b>Full Name</b>	Cristina C. Nunez Godoy
<b>Project Title</b>	Identifying socio-environmental conditions that promote adoption of conservation vs. land-use PES plans with limited biodiversity value in the Chaco Forest
<b>Application ID</b>	36706-B
<b>Date of this Report</b>	5 July 2023

**1. Indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.**

Objective	Not achieved	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
Identify the factors that favor adoption of forest conservation practices.				We successfully developed a list of potential factors through a literature review of peer-reviewed articles. The findings obtained through the literature review have been compiled into a manuscript, which has been submitted for publication and is currently undergoing the peer review process in Forest Policy and Economics.
Evaluate the influence of environmental and socio-economic factors on landholders' decision-making process to adopt conservation practices.				We successfully achieve this objective. Interviews with knowledgeable individuals, including two landholders and two experienced practitioners who have worked extensively with people in the chaco forest helped us to refine the list of factors and develop the survey. Landholders showed high willingness and interest in participating in this project, which allowed us to gather all the intended information and evaluate the influence of environmental and socio-economic factors on the landholder decision-making process to adopt conservation practices.
Generate crucial information and guidance for decision-makers to design and implement forest conservation practices and facilitate protection of environmental services.				This goal is currently in progress. Efforts are underway to validate results with stakeholders and generate comprehensive recommendations to provincial and national agencies in Argentina, enabling them to gain insightful perspectives on how the existing policies can be redesigned and improved to promote long-term conservation of the chaco region.

**2. Describe the three most important outcomes of your project.**

**a).** Our understanding of the key conditions that will improve the implementation of conservation mechanisms and maximise the achievement of conservation goals has increased. This understanding enables to prioritise the allocation of resources and

focus on the factors that hold the greatest potential for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of conservation efforts. By doing so, policy makers can generate superior conservation results, even in the face of budget limitations, and make informed and strategic decisions.

**b).** Active engagement and involvement of key stakeholders were prioritised and ensured throughout the project. Small and large landholders, PES programme technicians, governmental agents, referents of rural producer associations and NGOs have been involved in every step of this project. By involving diverse stakeholders, this project incorporated their valuable perspectives, expertise, and input, fostering collaboration and generating a more inclusive and impactful research.

**c).** This project generated field-based information that provides valuable insights into landholder capacity to adopt conservation practices, shedding light on the socio-economic and environmental factors that influence their decision-making process. This information not only complements existing data on the factors influencing landowners' willingness to participate in incentive-based initiatives (gathered with previous Rufford grant) but also contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the pillars of voluntary participation in conservation actions: motivations, barriers, and enabling factors. By examining these dimensions, we obtain a holistic perspective on landholders' voluntary engagement in conservation actions.

### **3. Explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.**

There were no unforeseen difficulties during the project.

### **4. Describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefited from the project.**

Local communities actively participated in various stages of this project. Landholders played a crucial role as survey participants, providing valuable insights and perspectives. To ensure effective participant recruitment, we collaborated with well-informed individuals and rural producer's organisations in each municipality who possessed a deep understanding of the local population. Also, landholders and experienced practitioners aided us in refining the list of factors and developing the survey and an undergraduate student from the career of natural resources engineer was recruited to assist with survey administration. Finally, the expertise of researchers, PES technicians, as well as members from NGOs and associations, proved instrumental during the survey instrument piloting stage.

### **5. Are there any plans to continue this work?**

Yes, we have two critical remaining phases: a) validation of results with stakeholders and generation of comprehensive recommendations to provincial and national agencies in Argentina, and b) dissemination of our findings in journals, workshops, or conferences.

**6. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?**

I plan to publish the results in peer-reviewed articles in top-tier journals to reach the broad scientific community. To date, previous RSG-funded research has resulted in two manuscripts published in "Forest Ecology and Policy" and "Ecosystem Services". Currently, one manuscript of this project is under review in "Forest Ecology and Policy", and another has been prepared for "Society and Natural Resources". In addition to scientific publications, I plan to disseminate results through: (1) meetings with surveyed landholders, key government officials (e.g., Ministry of Environment and environmental protection agency of Salta) and local NGOs and collaborators; and (2) participation in national and international webinars and conferences, such as the 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the Gran Chaco Americano in October 5-6, 2023.

**7. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?**

Important next steps are: (1) implement conservation actions such as restoring degraded areas, promoting active reforestation with native tree species, expanding the coverage of protected areas by establishing new protected areas or increasing the size existing ones, and promoting sustainable livestock practices; and (2) exploring alternative options to optimise the current budget and maximise the impact of available funds for conservation. This could involve seeking complementary sources of funding (e.g., FSC certifications and carbon projects) and offering short-term payments for sustainable production, where lower payments could be used in particular areas to help rural producers in transitioning to more sustainable production systems.

**8. Did you use The Rufford Foundation logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the Foundation receive any publicity during the course of your work?**

Yes, I used the Rufford Foundation logo during the International Seminar "Conservation and Management Strategies for the Sustainable Development of the Gran Chaco Americano." This event was organised by the Italian University Consortium for Argentina and the Catholic University of Salta. I also mentioned surveyed landowners and other stakeholders that my research was funded by Rufford Foundation will receive publicity on my peer-publications and future talks in seminar and conferences.

**9. Provide a full list of all the members of your team and their role in the project.**

I was working with **Dr. Colombo-Speroni** as my project director and with **Mg. Girardin** as co-director. Dr. Colombo-Speroni, Associated Professor at the Catholic University of Salta (UCASAL), and Mg. Girardin, Adjunct Researcher at the Argentine National Scientific and Technical Research Council (CONICET), oversee the execution of this project and provided valuable guidance. They also played instrumental roles in the revision and edition of manuscripts and were the original members of this project. Later, **Dr. Mauricio Nunez-Regueiro**, Lead of the Gran Chaco iconic place for The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and **Dra. Gisela Cordoba**, Scientific Application

Specialist in rural and livestock resources (NW branch) of the National Parks Administration, joined the team. Dr. Mauricio Nunez-Regueiro contributed expertise in data analysis, interpretation, and establishing connections with stakeholders and NGOs working in the Chaco Forest area. Dra. Gisela Cordoba provided logistical support during field trips, shared her valuable knowledge from working with rural producers in the Chaco Forest, and facilitated connections with local communities.

**10. Any other comments?**

Thank you for supporting this project. I look forward to continuing our relationship towards the chaco forest conservation trough projects that involve conservation actions.