

# RSPO

## RSPO NOTIFICATION OF PROPOSED NEW PLANTING

*This notification shall be on the RSPO website for 30 days as required by the RSPO procedures for new plantings (<http://www.rspo.org/?q=page/535>). It has also been posted on local on-site notice boards.*

**Date of notification:** March 11, 2013

*Tick whichever is appropriate*

<input type="checkbox"/>	This is a completely new development and stakeholders may submit comments.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	This is part of an ongoing planting and is meant for notification only.

**COMPANY:** Golden Veroleum (Liberia), Inc.

**SUBSIDIARY(If any):** -

**RSPO Membership No.:** 1-0102-11-000-00 approved on 29/08/2011

**Location of proposed new planting:** Sinoe County Liberia, districts of Butaw, Kpayan and Numapoh. Map on following page.

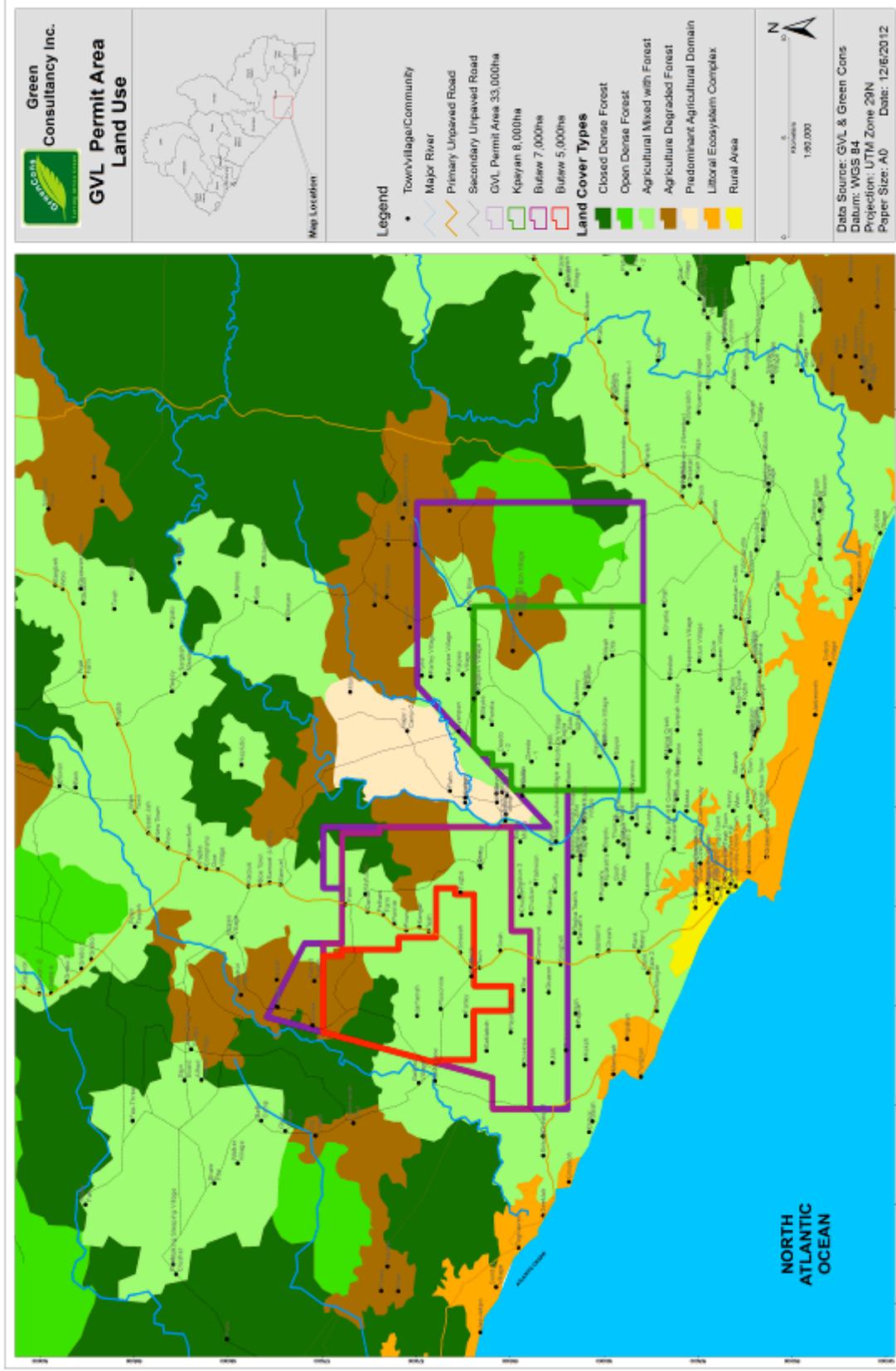


Figure 1: Map of the Segments of Phase I (20,000ha) within the Permitted area (33,000ha)

## 1. SUMMARY FROM SEI ASSESSMENTS:

Golden VerOleum (Liberia) Inc, a subsidiary of the Verdant Fund LP entered into a concession agreement with the Government of Liberia for the development of oil palm plantation in Sinoe, GrandKru, Maryland, River Cess and River Gee counties in Southeastern Liberia. The Act to ratify the Concession Agreement between the Republic of Liberia and Golden Veroleum(Liberia) Inc. was approved September 1, 2010 and published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Monrovia, Liberia and printed September 2, 2010. The signed and ratified concession agreement covers a total of approximately 500,000 acres (220,000 hectares). The concession agreement provides for the Government and GVL to implement a social and community development program, which includes employee housing, education and medical care. Additionally, a Liberian smallholder program is to develop 100,000 acres (40,000 hectares) of oil palm in support of local Liberia oil palm farming initiatives. In support of biodiversity conservation in the country, GVL is under obligation to carefully preserve original (primary) forest and areas of high biodiversity, sacred community lands located within its proposed project area.

As part of its obligation under the concession agreement, GVL has decided to initiate this large-scale oil palm plantation by beginning with the cultivation of land within a Gross Area of investigation of 33,000 ha in two districts of Sinoe County, Butaw and Numopu County District, Kpanyan District. In furtherance of its obligation and in regards to Annex I Section 6 of the Environment Protection and Management Law of the Republic of Liberia has obtained from the Environmental Protection Agency of Liberia (EPAL) a three years Environmental Permit-EPA/EC/EIS/001-0511 to commence operation in Liberia after preparation, submission and subsequent stakeholders presentation of an Environmental Scoping Report and an Environmental Social Impact Assessment Report. These two reports were completed December 2010 and February 2011.GVL has also received an official letter-DED/EPA-06/192/10/RL from the EPA for the establishment of a 50 acre nursery, demonstration and training site in Plusonnie, Butaw District, which is to serve as a ground for training and project initiation.

In consonance with the RSPO New Planting Procedure (NPP) the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment report has been revised with the intent of identifying those areas of the report that requires additional information. This revision includes: reviewing and validating the report in consideration of project activities; updating information regarding local people's concerns and opinions about the project including reconfirmation of their free prior and informed consent and re-evaluation of socio-economic impacts associated with the project as well as people's driven mitigation measures that promotes sustainable development. The review was conducted alongside the High Conservation Value assessment. The HCV assessment involves satellite imagery and GIS analysis, field surveys to identify and demarcate sacred sites, community cemetery, farming reserves and environmental sensitive areas in reference to high conservation values ranging from 1 to 6, holding community and national level stakeholders meetings. All of these were achieved through working along with representatives from GVL and the local communities.

## **RSPO NOTIFICATION OF PROPOSED NEW PLANTING**

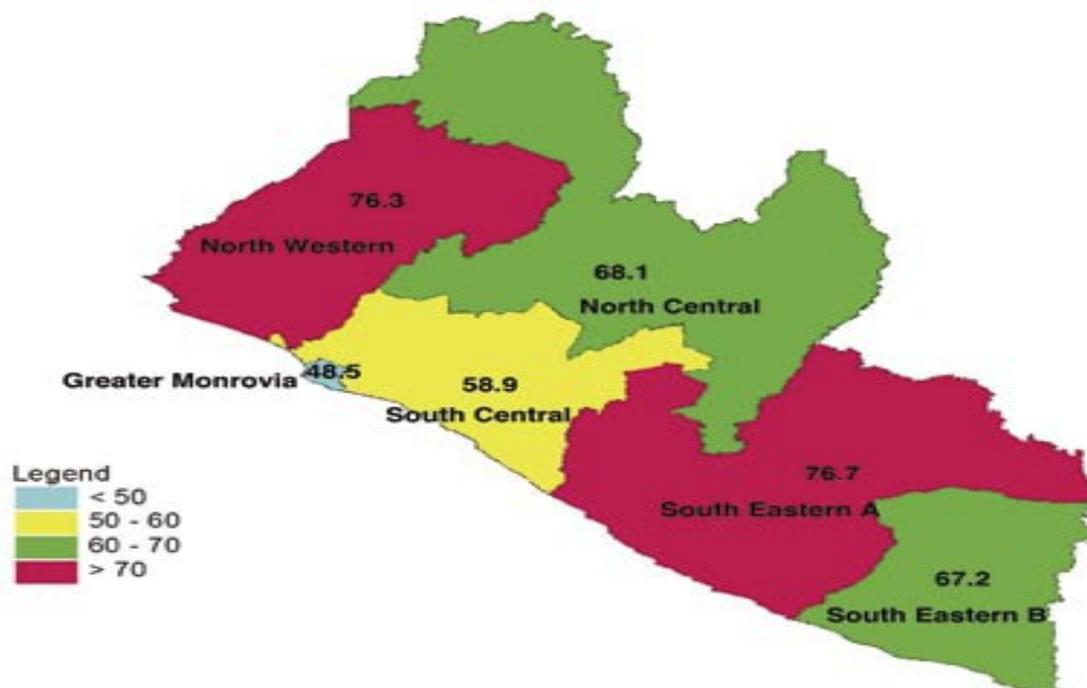
In terms of need, the project area is located in southeastern Liberia. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) prepared for Liberia indicates a 77% poverty head count for this region, noting it to be one of the poorest in the country, despite its large land size. The region is also noted to be one of the lowest populated regions of the country with very little development.

### **1.1 Project Area and Location**

The project overall (gross) permit area covers 33,000 ha of land located in, Butaw and Kpanyan District of Sinoe County, encompassing several towns and villages, including: Plusunnie, Pynes Town, Kilo Town, Dejila, Solo Village, Bukrah, Saklaboh, Butaw Compound, Otis Village, Jayyeneh, Farley Town, Ceedor, Kaytuzon etc. The land area earmarked for possible planting currently predominantly consists of agriculture degraded lowland forests. Patches of intermediate and fragmented primary forests are in some areas of the project, especially along river banks and remote areas. Nevertheless, comprehensive assessment done in the new planting area of Butaw District and Numopu County District, Kpanyan District, identified a very small presence of forest area saturated with agricultural activities between Charlie and Bah Towns and mainly along the Sinoe, Petu, Plussonie, Sanna Rivers and Wannie Creeks, while the rest of the remaining land is strictly degraded agriculture land.

### **1.2 Need**

In terms of need, the project area is located in southeastern Liberia. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) prepared for Liberia indicates a 77% poverty head count for this region, noting it to be one of the poorest in the country, despite its large land size. The region is also noted to be one of the lowest populated regions of the country with very little development.



Source: LISGIS 2007

**Figure 2: Poverty Prevalence**

The low population and high poverty rate in the area is largely due to the lack of infrastructure and investment in the area, which is compelling the youthful population to migrate to other economically vibrant areas of the country. This project fits within the framework of GOL Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS). In that it will create jobs, provide basic social services, add value to Liberia’s oil palm sector and generate sufficient revenues from taxes to support GOL post war development agenda. GVL has indicated its determination to ensuring that its oil palm development activities are environmentally friendly, and in accordance with the principles and criteria of the Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil (“RSPO”). This commitment is based on the following reasons:

- A perennial tree crop like oil palm provides permanent crop cover to reduce soil erosion especially where terracing and natural ground cover are used.
- It is not affected by serious pests or diseases, thus minimizing the use of pesticides.
- Existing and future technology utilizes many plant parts and products which results in minimal waste generation, which is then managed to mitigate potential environmental impacts.
- The crop cycle of 25 years makes it an effective crop in ‘greening’ of the environment.
- Sensitive natural forests that are remnant in the area, along with community sacred and reserved forest will be retained during the project operation

### 1.3 Project Activities

The activities earmarked for the project have been scheduled to include the following :

## RSPO NOTIFICATION OF PROPOSED NEW PLANTING

### **Nursery Establishment**

- Access road
- Base camp
- Site clearing - under brushing & clear felling
- Biomass management & disposal
- Earthworks, drainage & irrigation
- Planting and maintenance of seedlings

One nursery site has initially been identified comprising of 250 acres (100 hectares) in Plussonie, Butaw District. EPA has granted provisional permit for the establishment of 50 acres of this nursery which is to serve as a training ground for the project. In line with the ratified concession agreement, 40,000 hectare in addition to the total 220,000 hectare is allocated to out growers scheme. In regards to this, 17% of the total planting area will be allocated as plasma area. The schedule of activities associated with the planting are tied to GVL's ongoing FPIC activities with the surrounding communities. It is anticipated that no more than 40-50% of the 20,000 ha under this report will be planted after set aside of town and forest zones, riverine buffers, sacred sites, community farming areas and assuming that communities and individual farmers will wish to retain some already planted areas and not transfer these to oil palm development. Subject to the FPIC processes, in 2013 and 2014 GVL anticipates a total further development within the 20,000 ha zone of no more than 10,000 ha

Prior to the commencement of the revision of the HCV assessment as per the new planting procedure, GVL had already cleared a total of approximately 1,658 ha of the 5000ha. Out of this number a total of 70.81ha has been used for the nursery establishment and 870ha planted with oil palm. According to GVL, the initial clearing was initiated upon requests from the communities and government for the company to urgently begin operations and generate employment as a way of easing the economic hardship of the population in the area. Apart from the 5,000ha block, the 7000ha and 8000ha blocks located in Butaw and Numopoh have only limited clearing or planting activities so far.

Below is an outline of project activities earmarked for the plantation:

### **Site Preparation**

- Access road
- Base camp
- Utilities provision
- Site clearing - under brushing & clear felling
- Biomass management & disposal
- Earthworks, drainage, infrastructure

## **RSPO NOTIFICATION OF PROPOSED NEW PLANTING**

- Natural ground cover establishment

### **Field Establishment**

- Field lining & holing
- Final culling
- Transplanting

### **Maintenance & Harvesting**

- Fertilizer application
- Use of control agro-chemicals
- General field upkeep
- Harvesting
- Transportation

### **Replanting**

- Nursery establishment
- Removal of old palm trees
- Biomass management & disposal
- Field lining and holing
- Transplanting of mature seedlings
- Maintenance & field upkeep
- Harvesting & transportation

### **Abandonment**

- Evacuation of plantation staff & workers
- Removal of equipment, machinery & structures
- Site restoration/ rehabilitation

## **1.4 Project Options**

At present, the land use in the project area is mostly disturbed forest and rain-fed agriculture: shifting cultivation. If the Project area was not to be developed into an oil palm plantation, the area will continue to be utilized for this purpose, which has not proven to be a sustainable option under present conditions, given that agriculture production in the area has not been able to guarantee food security for the population. Therefore, the livelihood of the people will remain unchanged with limited or no access to basic social services and poor quality of life, which accounts for the high poverty rate in the region, low population and underdevelopment compared to other regions.

## **1.5 The Existing Environment**

Environmental baseline studies of the Project Area was undertaken by a team of Evaluators and Field Assistants from GREENCONS) in order to gather information in respect to the status quo even before the project commences. Following the Scoping Studies, and in line with the term of reference for the ESIA submitted to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from the Scoping Study, GreenCons again in December of 2012, conducted a comprehensive Environmental and Social Impact Assessment and an overview of the High Conservation Value Forest assessment study of the project area to ascertain the impacts the project will have on the existing environment, as well as identify high conservation values associated with the area.

### **1.5.1 Atmospheric Environment**

Sinoe has an evergreen rain forest which receives an annual rainfall of 80-85 inches. The rainy season extends from April through October, with  $\pm 90\%$  of the rainfall occurring between mid-April and mid-October. The area receives a large amount of rain each year and large amounts of condensation occur. The dry season extends from mid-October to mid-April. The humidity is low during the day and increasing slightly as the temperature cools at night. A relative humidity of 90% to 100% is common during the rainy season. During the dry season it decreases between 80% and 85%. In March and February the driest period of the year, relative air humidity decreases to as low as 65%. Total wind speed is greatest in the rainy season and lowest in the dry season. The climate of the area can be described as tropical, experiencing warm dry seasons and cold wet season

### **1.5.2 Aquatic Environment**

The entire project area is drained mainly by the Sinoe and Tarsuerivers, there are other small surface water bodies including rivers, streams and creeks that fall in the project area. These include Plussonie, Ceedor, Wannie, and Petu. The Sinoe and Tarsue rivers flow in a number of directions that eventually lead southward to the Atlantic Ocean.

Most of the water bodies of the Project Area are generally satisfactory. There are no major sources of pollution from the current activities within the project area. The river water is widely used for domestic usage such as drinking, cleaning, and agriculture activities.

About 15 native fresh water species were recorded in the project area, which are a source of food for the population.

### **1.5.3 Geology**

Landscape formation found in the area is flat plains with undulating hills that range between 0-30m. The geology of the project area comprise of the rocks of the Liberian Age, Eburnean Age province. Rocks of the Eburnean Age are similar to those of the Liberian Age in terms of structural trend but are more biotite rich. A major tectonic feature within rocks of the Eburnean Age province is the Dube shear zone. It is 2 to 3km wide and has been delineated on the basis of outcrops, topography and magnetic data. Groundwater resources in the area will be of no problems when it comes to finding the requirements for drinking water.

#### 1.5.4 Floral Environment

The proposed project area has been associated with prolonged anthropogenic activities associated with shifting cultivation (farming). These activities have affected the kind of vegetation in the area. Forest vegetation comprising of forests vegetation are mainly restricted to banks of rivers and in remote parts of the districts. The area is teemed with different varieties of commercial timber species and secondary vegetation that includes *Terminaliaivorensis*, *Terminaliasuperba*, *Zanthoxylumgillettii*, *Petersianthusmacrocarpus*, *nuclei dederachi*, *Entandrophragmaangolense*, *Paspalumscrobiculatum*, *LeersiaHexandra*, *Mohriacaffrorum*, *Pterisvittata*, *Lenziteselegans*, *Alchoniaspp*, *odorataspp*, *scleriaspp* etc.

#### 1.5.5 Fauna Environment

The results of the survey in the area pointed out that fauna integrity of the project area has experienced significant level of disturbance due to farming and hunting pressure, which has caused many of the large and charismatic mammal species to migrate to high forest areas. The predominant species in the area was the Greater Cane Rat *Thryonomyswinderianus* along with other small mammals such as Rusty-bellied Brush-furred Rat *Lophuromysikapusi*, Guinea Gerbil *Tateraguineae*, Miller's Striped Mouse *Hybomysplanifron*, Tree Pangolin *Manisticuspis*, Ants bear *Cynictispenicillata* and Red Legged Sun Squirrel. There was evidence of the occurrence of species protected under Liberian laws, such as Water Chevrotain-*Hyemoschusaquaticu*, and Black Duiker, *CephalophusNiger*, which were observed as killed bush meat.

A survey of the avifaunal population in the area identified several forest and lowland birds that include: Palm-Nut Vulture, Yellow-Spotted Barbet, Senegal Coucal, White-backedheron, white faced whistling duck, African Fish Eagle, Harrier hawk, black sparrow hawk, Ahanta francolin, Black crane, mottled spinetail, Piping hornbill, tinkerbirds, pigeons etc.

#### 1.5.6 Soil Environment

The soil type is generally comprised of latosols (ferralsols<sup>1</sup>) with some evidence of regosols. Ferralsols dominate the new planting area at about 90% with small portion of regosols. Ferralsols and regosols are two of the 30 soil groups in the classification system of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Ferralsols are red and yellow weathered soils whose colors result from an accumulation of metal oxides, particularly iron and aluminum (from which the name of the soil group is derived. Regosols are characterized by shallow, medium-to fine-textured, unconsolidated parent material that may be of alluvial origin and by the lack of a significant soil horizon (layer) formation because of dry or cold climatic conditions

They are formed on geologically old parent materials in humid tropical climates, with rainforest vegetation growing in the natural state. Because of the residual metal oxides and the leaching of mineral nutrients, they have low fertility and require additions of lime and fertilizer if they are to be used for agriculture. Ferralsols are suitable for tree crops such as oil palm, rubber, or coffee.

---

<sup>1</sup> Low humiclatosols

## **RSPO NOTIFICATION OF PROPOSED NEW PLANTING**

The latosols (ferralsols) are heavily leached, and silica, nutrients and humus are mostly washed out due to high rainfalls. Regosols are sandy soils. They are composed of coarse sand and silt, with a very low clay and organic matter content. These are mainly found close to the coastal areas around Greenville. The soils located beneath the forest canopies are dark gray to black in color. In the agriculture-degraded areas, the soils appear light to reddish brown. Swamp soil occurring in swampy areas has high concentration of humus with layers consisting of biodegradable materials; and alluvial soil with a high nutrient concentration which is suitable for agriculture.

### **1.5.7 Land Use**

Land use in the proposed area can be classified as subsistence agriculture (farming) and commercial suitability areas.

### **1.5.8 Socio-Economic Environment**

Subsistence agricultural is the main form of livelihood within and surrounding the project area and. Agriculture accounts for more than 95% of the labor force within the project area. The remaining are those involved in hunting and petty trade. This reflects the agrarian nature of the local economy. Most of the road networks in the Project Area are feeder roads that are in extremely poor condition, especially during rainy season. The lack of infrastructure for health care, education, water and sanitation is largely responsible for the high poverty rate and high cost of living in the area.

## **1.6 Environmental & Social Assessment, Mitigation and Monitoring**

Procedures have been used to identify potential impacts included standard identification tools as well as discussions with stakeholders, community leaders and residents as well as other experts. Potential impacts were assessed according to a set of assessment criteria and a significance value was assigned. One alternative (No Action) was considered. Potential impacts were identified and their level of significance was assessed. Mitigation measures were proposed for all the identified potential impacts. People, organizations/ institutions and other stakeholders of the Project, including interested parties have been identified at local and national level.

## **2. SUMMARY FROM HCV ASSESSMENT(S):**

The high conservation value assessment report is focused on a 20,000 ha area (5,000ha and 7,000 block of land located in Butaw District, and the block of 8,000 ha located in Numopo District, Kpanyan Statutory District), in Sinoe County. The area forms part of the area included for consideration of concession development (Gross Concession Area), under the Concession awarded to Golden Veroleum Liberia Inc. by the Government of Liberia. The Act to rectify the Concession Agreement between the Republic of Liberia and Golden Veroleum(Liberia) Inc. was approved September 1, 2010 and published by authority of theMinistry of Foreign Affairs Monrovia, Liberia and printed September 2, 2010. The signed and ratified concession agreement which was awarded to GVL covers a total of approximately 500,000 acres (220,000 hectares) in five counties. The concession agreement provides for the Government and GVL to implement a social and community development

## RSPO NOTIFICATION OF PROPOSED NEW PLANTING

program, which includes employee housing, education and medical care. Additionally, a Liberian smallholder program is to develop 100,000 acres (40,000 hectares) of oil palm in support of local Liberia oil palm farming initiatives.

In March 2011, a three years Environmental Permit (EPA/EC/EIS/001-0511) was issued by the Environmental Protection Agency of Liberia for the Project, following the review and approval of an Environmental & Social Impact Assessment report prepared by Green Consultancy Inc. for and initial 33,000ha area as part of the Gross Concession.

In consonance with the RSPO a comprehensive and detail assessment was conducted within the 3 blocks from 18 September to 6 October in order to update and validate the initial HCV report prepared in 2010. The assessment involves the analysis of satellite imagery and data generated through the use of GIS, field surveys to identify and demarcate sacred sites, community cemetery, farming reserves and environmental sensitive areas in reference to high conservation values ranging from 1 to 6, holding community and national level stakeholders meetings. All of these were achieved through working along with representatives from GVL and the local communities.

The six HCVs identified and studied are as follow:

1. **HCV1:** Forest areas containing globally, regionally or nationally significant concentrations of biodiversity values (e.g. endemism, endangered species, refugia).
2. **HCV2:** Forest areas containing globally, regionally or nationally significant large landscape level forests, contained within, or containing the management unit, where viable populations of most if not all naturally occurring species exist in natural patterns of distribution and abundance.
3. **HCV3:** Forest areas that are in or contain rare, threatened or endangered ecosystems.
4. **HCV4:** Forest areas that provide basic services of nature in critical situations (e.g. watershed protection, erosion control).
5. **HCV5:** Forest areas fundamental to meeting basic needs of local communities (e.g. subsistence, health).
6. **HCV6:** Forest areas critical to local communities' traditional cultural identity (areas of cultural, ecological, economic or religious significance identified in cooperation with such local communities).

The findings of the assessment indicates that there are neither primary forest within the planting area, nor any peat soil; nevertheless, three out of the six HCVs were identified as:

**HCV4.** Forest areas that provide basic services of nature in critical situations (e.g. watershed protection, erosion control).

The remaining forest along the Plussonie, Ceedor, Petu and Winnie Creeks, the major surface water bodies within the blocks from which all the other smaller streams originate.

**HCV5.** Forest areas that is fundamental to meeting basic needs of local communities (e.g.

## RSPO NOTIFICATION OF PROPOSED NEW PLANTING

subsistence farming, health etc.).

With the consent of every town, identification of allocated land areas are to be set aside for the use of every community. The entire demarcation process is being discussed with the local communities.

**HCV6.** Forest areas critical to local communities' traditional cultural identity (areas of cultural, ecological, economic or religious significance identified in cooperation with such local communities).

This report includes an overview of the HCV assessment process, results of the assessment, and a summary of the current management actions designed to maintain or enhanced those values. It can be noted that there are no primary forests or peat soils within the study area.

This report includes an overview of the HCV assessment process, results of the assessment, and a summary of the current management actions designed to maintain or enhanced those values.

### **2.1 Conclusion**

In the HCVs assessment conducted within the planting area comprising of a number of towns and villages, it was investigated that no primary forest was found neither was there any peat soil, infact, there is no peat soil found in Liberia. Nevertheless, among the six categories of HCVs, three were identified within the planting blocks:

#### **HCV4.1: Forests critical to water catchments and HCV4.2: Forests critical to erosion control**

A second basic service of nature that forests provide is terrain stability, including control of erosion, landslides, avalanches and downstream sedimentation. All areas can potentially suffer some degree of erosion, but often the extent or risk of these is very low or the consequences minor. In some cases, though, forests protect against erosion, landslides and avalanches in areas where the consequences, in terms of loss of productive land, damage to ecosystems, property or loss of human life, are severe. In these cases, the ecosystem service provided by the forest is critical, and it is these that should be designated HCVFs. The forest along the Plussonie and Sanna creeks and the Petu and Winnie Creeks and the Ceedor rivers should be zoned for riparian protection.

#### **HCV5: Forest areas fundamental to meeting basic needs of local communities**

Every forested area surrounding town and villages within the planting area has been allocated owing to the fact that they depend on forests for some of their basic needs.

#### **HCV6: Forest Areas of Critical Value to Traditional Culture**

The Sacred Forests found in Kilo Town and Plussonie and the many burial ground identified within and surrounding the towns and villages in the concession.

The HCV report must be considered not an event document in which once approval and certification have been acknowledged, then the report is thrown on the shelf as one of management past trophies, rather, a living document that daily informs management about the outcomes of the delineated HCV, its monitoring techniques, positive outcomes and

## **RSPO NOTIFICATION OF PROPOSED NEW PLANTING**

challenges associated with the management of the HCVs and the best recommendations. If necessary, and along with the surrounding towns and villages being affected by the HCVs, revision to the document depending on changing situation can be made.

### 3. SUMMARY OF PLANS:

#### 3.1 Plan for HCV Monitoring and Regular Review of Data

GVL will fully implement the recommendations provided in the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment reports and HCV assessments (of 2010, 2011 and 2012) made by Green Consultants, Inc., and those resulting from the internal work of the company's research, Environmental and Community Affairs departments to ensure that there is minimum negative social and environmental impact in the surrounding landscape. Furthermore, given the poverty and vulnerability, and desire for development, of the communities in the proposed GVL development regions, GVL will also seek to ensure and monitor the positive social and human impact being sought.

#### 3.2 Monitoring

**Operational monitoring:** As described for each element (in tables)

**Monthly internal monitoring reports:** Internal reports will be provided monthly (Environmental and social activities reports, Grievances report, HR report). **Review** in monthly management meeting.

**Quarterly monitoring reports:** Summary of the monthly reports and a management conclusions section will be produced, including for stakeholder dissemination. **Review** in quarterly stakeholder meetings (timing may be subsequently adjusted).

**Annual monitoring report:** Per Liberian regulations, there will be an annual review of the Company's adherence to the environmental permit issued by the Environmental Protection Agency of Liberia and the Environmental permit will be subject to review. **Review** by EPAL and in annual seminar.

Our Sr Vice President of Operations will oversee the Environmental Manager and Community Affairs Managers responsible for managing the Environmental and Community teams who will be responsible for the survey, planning and community liaison and for placing the appropriate signage and delimiters to demarcate conservation areas and monitor the areas on a regular basis. Managers, team leaders, workers and contractors will be advised on our regulations regarding prohibition on respecting riparian buffer zones. Guard stations will also be established at all entries to monitor the entry and exit of individuals to ensure there is no trafficking of timber or animals. The joint teams team is also working with local partners to develop a community awareness programs covering the critical concerns.

### **3.3 Management and Mitigation Plans for Threats to HCV Areas and to Maintain or Enhance Conservation Values Identified**

Guidelines per each HCV:

#### **HCV 1 - Significant concentrations of biodiversity values**

Forest areas containing globally, regionally or nationally significant concentrations of biodiversity values.

Not present in the area.

#### **HCV 2 - Significant landscape forests with viable species**

Forest areas containing globally, regionally, or nationally significant large landscape level forests, contained within, or containing the management unit, where viable population of most if not all naturally occurring species exist in natural patterns or distribution and abundance.

Not present in the area.

#### **HCV 3 - Rare, threatened or endangered ecosystems**

Forest areas that are in or contain rare, threatened or endangered ecosystems.

Not present in area.

#### **HCV 4 - Forest areas that provide basic services of nature in critical situations**

(Including HCV 4.1 Forests critical to water catchments and HCV 4.2 Erosion Control)

Forests play an important role in preventing flooding, controlling stream flow regulation and water quality. Where a forest area constitutes a large proportion of a catchment, it may be able to play a critical role in maintaining these functions. The greater the risk of flooding or drought or the greater the importance of water usage, the more likely it is that the forest is critical to maintaining these services and more likely that the forest is a High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF).

#### *Management objective*

To ensure perpetual flow of clean water through the forest and for the host communities by setting aside and maintaining appropriate buffer zones for all major rivers and streams in the concession areas and to ensure that the oil palm plantation operation does not threaten communities' access to water resources; and to ensure that the forest continue to maintain its function of controlling erosion and catchment areas.

#### *Threat types*

Threats to the above objective will include but are not limited to the following:

## RSPO NOTIFICATION OF PROPOSED NEW PLANTING

- Mistaken or inadequate planning to retain important HCV areas
- Operational encroachment into HCV areas
- Wrong work timing such as in heavy rain
- Erosion and silt/mud flows
- Clearing and removal of vegetation off HCV zones by local communities
- Lack of monitoring

### *Management regulations*

Key regulations – specific standards and rules are shown in the rules table

- Water catchment areas should be protected to ensure that communities have unhindered access to quality water for their livelihood purposes and riparian forests are reserved to ensure that they maintain their function in controlling erosion
- All the specified HCVs are to be mapped out.
- Regular meeting with local communities to include discussion of the HCV establishment and their participation in the management of the HCV encouraged based on information sharing and awareness.
- Riparian reserves to identified, established, mapped, documented and respected (specific standards are established in the details section).
- Protection and maintenance of buffer zones, erosion control practices for all areas with slopes especially near any surface water.
- Visible signs are to be posted around the HCV and maps provided to land preparation team prior to clearing of any block. The team is to adhere to the map provided and avoid any impact to no go area. Land clearing activities need to be monitored and accounted for periodically. Penalties to be established for violators abusing the sanity of designated “no go” areas.
- Heavy equipment crossing through major river tributaries to be avoided by placing coverts to all points of crossing.
- Monitoring of the HCVs to be periodically done with the involvement of representatives of host communities, other stakeholders and the environmental team of the company.
- Surface water testing of the major rivers within the concession to be done and records of all testing kept to detect any change in water quality.

## RSPO NOTIFICATION OF PROPOSED NEW PLANTING

- Monitoring to include measuring fluctuation activity of water level during rainy season and dry season as baseline in rivers which has the important function as the catchment areas
- Refer to the Specific HCV Maps Based Guide for additional plans to maintain and enhance conservation values

### **HCV 5 - Meeting basic needs of local communities**

Forest areas and are fundamental to meeting basic needs of local communities members for food farming and for those members retaining traditional lifestyles, also for hunting and gathering of livelihood needs, e.g. rattan and thatch).

#### *Management objective*

The objective of management under this HCV is to ensure mutual co-existence between the company and the host communities by ensuring that the basic dependence needs of the communities are supported and guaranteed.

#### *Threat types*

Threats to the above objective will include but are not limited to the following:

- Wrong or mistaken land planning, information and consent process resulting in not recognizing of host communities farmland or other community or private lands, or lands used for other livelihood/household needs
- Encroachment on planned restricted land by clearing operators

#### *Management regulations*

Key regulations – specific standards and rules are shown in the rules table

- Community members who wish to retain traditional life and sustenance styles to have the means to maintain a sustainable livelihood and agricultural practices with adequate farmlands and forest reserves
- Map out all host communities farmland and land used for other critical needs
- Schedule meetings along with the local communities for the purpose of explaining the mapping process and the essence of the HCV identification;
- Survey and demarcate along with host communities and other stakeholders all designated and mapped farmland ensuring their full participation in the process, thereby avoiding confusion and misunderstanding in the future;
- Recognize community's desired balance between land to use for development vs land to retain in traditional use, and the shift in aspirations (e.g. thatch being the necessary roofing material under poverty, while communities desire to roof with metal sheeting as soon as they have any income to do so).

## RSPO NOTIFICATION OF PROPOSED NEW PLANTING

- Record all meetings, attendance, minutes and approval documentation commencing and ending the process;
- Annually monitor the usage of the farmland
- Refer to the Specific HCV Maps Based Guide for additional plans to maintain and enhance conservation values

### **HCV 6 - Forest Areas of Critical Value to Traditional Culture**

Forests can be critical to societies and communities for their cultural identity. This value is designed to protect the traditional culture of local communities where the forest is critical to their identity, thereby helping to maintain the cultural integrity of the community. Additionally, abandoned or temporary living places in the forest (such as hidden huts from the war years) may contain gravesites that are not now maintained or cared, but nevertheless important heritage.

#### *Management objective*

To give full consideration of the way of life of the host communities by ensuring that their beliefs and practices are encouraged and respected without any interference, disturbance, or disruption as a result of plantation development.

#### *Threats*

Threats to the above objective will include but are not limited to the following:

- Lack of inventory of area prior to clearing activities;
- Unmaintained sites such as graves forgotten or semi-forgotten, and difficulty to detect in advance of development
- Communities and traditional leaders not being unanimous over sacred areas and their use
- Land clearing activities encroaching by accident on sites to be preserved

#### *Management regulations*

Key regulations – specific standards and rules are shown in the rules table

- The culture and rights of the local communities as well as their assets are respected and maintained
- Participatory mapping of the considered area with communities having interests and access
- The immediate host communities need to be fully aware of the proposed development area in order to identify any sacred area or unmarked graves that might be in the area to be cleared;

## RSPO NOTIFICATION OF PROPOSED NEW PLANTING

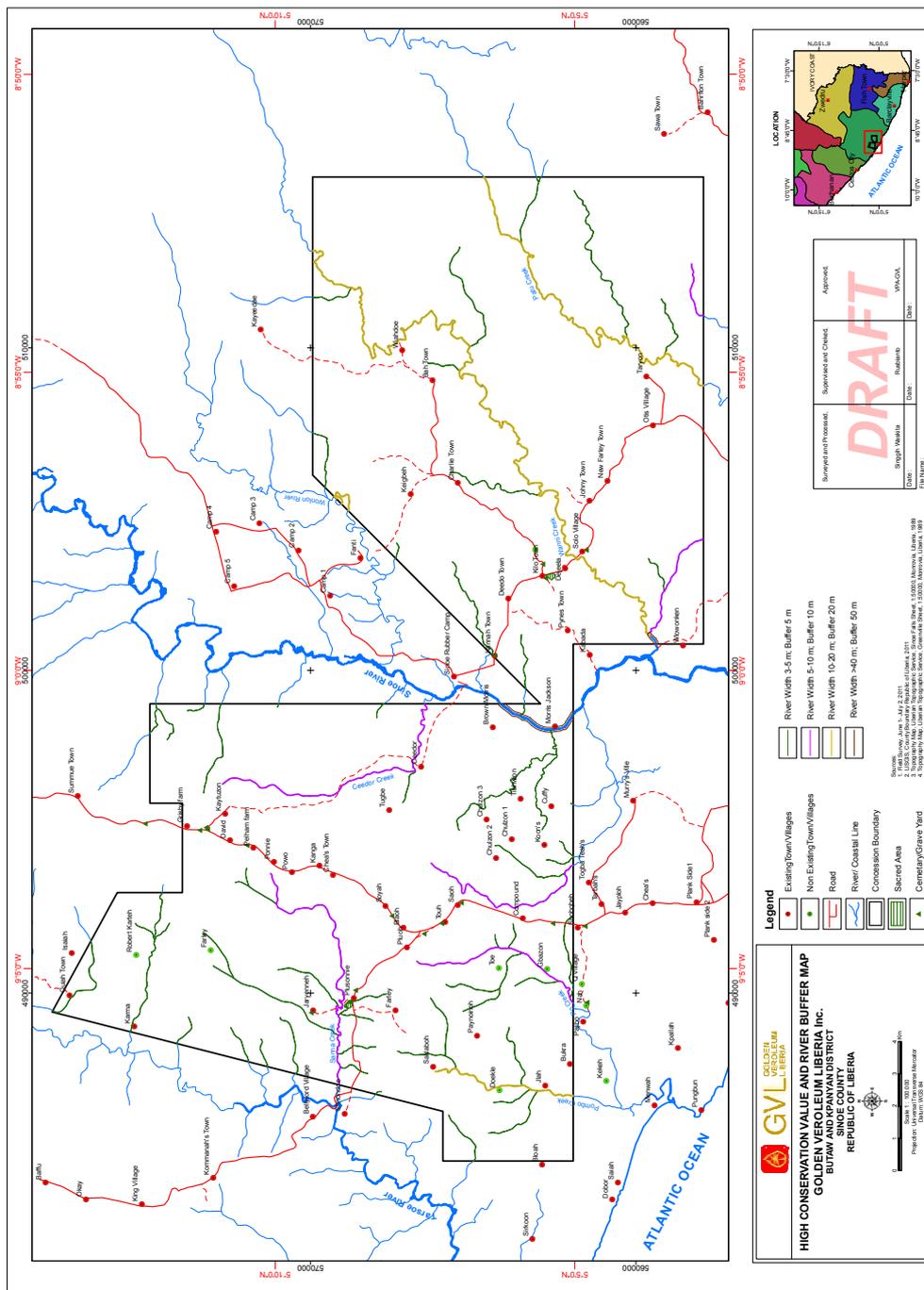
- The company needs to ensure that clear explanations concerning HCV is made to the host communities in order to guarantee their full participation and involvement in the demarcation process;
- Identification of any area related to this HCV to be demarcated and signs posted naming the owning community;
- Photo and other records relating to the lack of any identified area or the presence of identified areas needs to be taken and recorded;
- Any proposals to relocate traditional significant areas should be approached very cautiously and preferably avoided. Any negotiations entered into between the host communities and the company over the removal and subsequent relocation of any area relating to this HCV to be documented and recorded with photos and attendance of all present including other stakeholders;
- Advisory to the operational surveyors and operators to recognize and avoid potential sites not identified by community members in advance
- Monitoring of all sites demarcated to be periodically carried out by the company and the host communities' representative in order to ensure appreciation of the site.
- Refer to the Specific HCV Maps Based Guide for additional plans to maintain and enhance conservation values

### 3.4 Specific maps and details of plans and regulations

#### Specific HCV Maps Based Guide

#### 3.4.1 Minimum Riparian Buffers

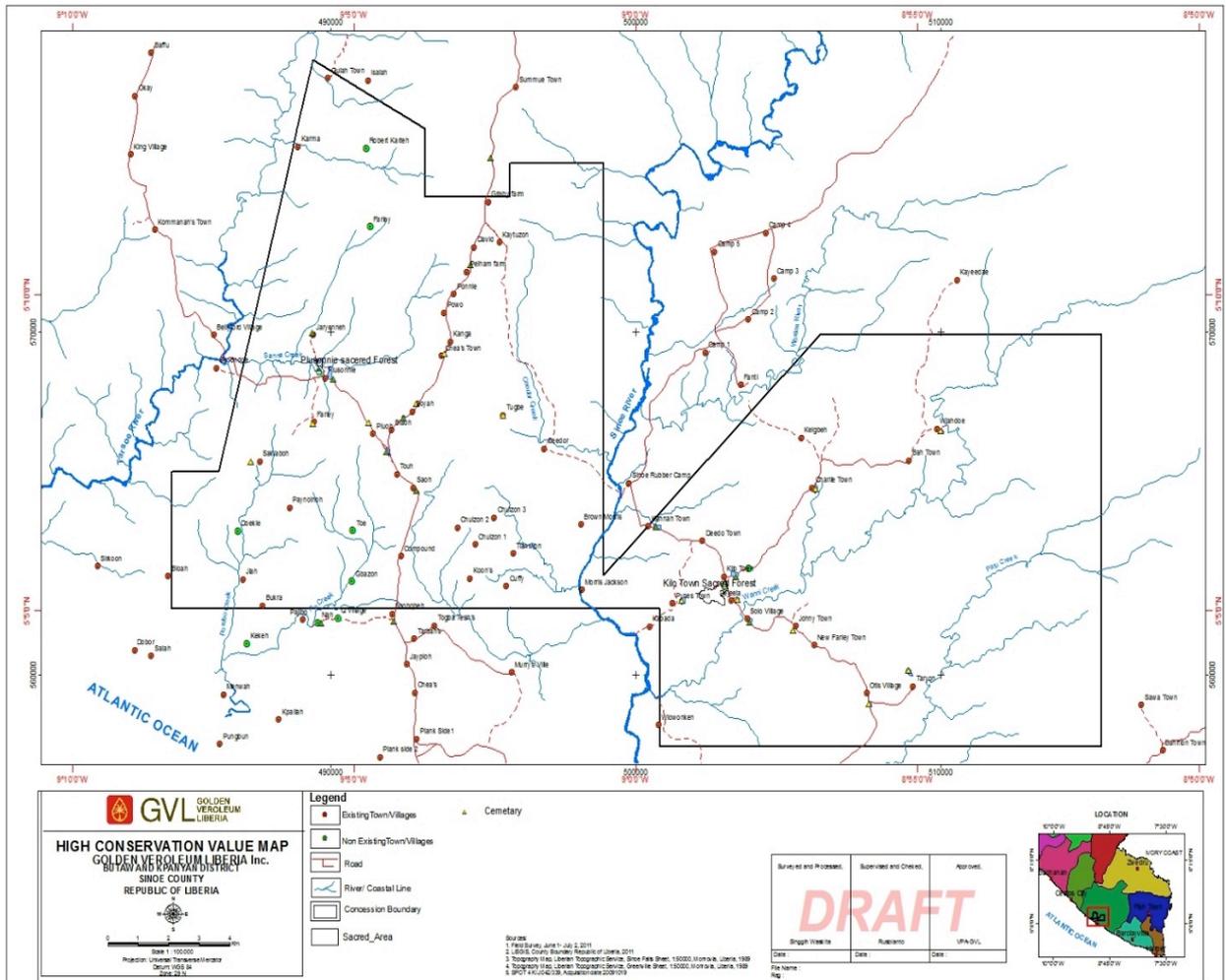
Riparian and associated wet swamp patches and grove areas are also planned to meet communities traditional forest resources needs (gathering and materials). Note, maps may be updated and revised based on weather patterns/high flows experience.



RSPO NOTIFICATION OF PROPOSED NEW PLANTING

3.4.2 Sacred Areas – Cemeteries and Shrine Areas

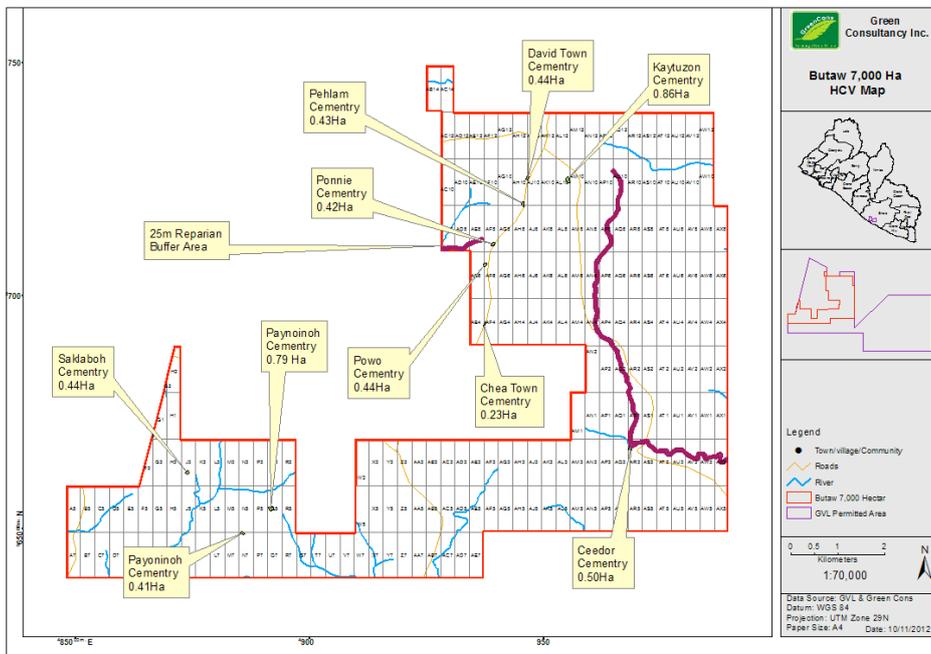
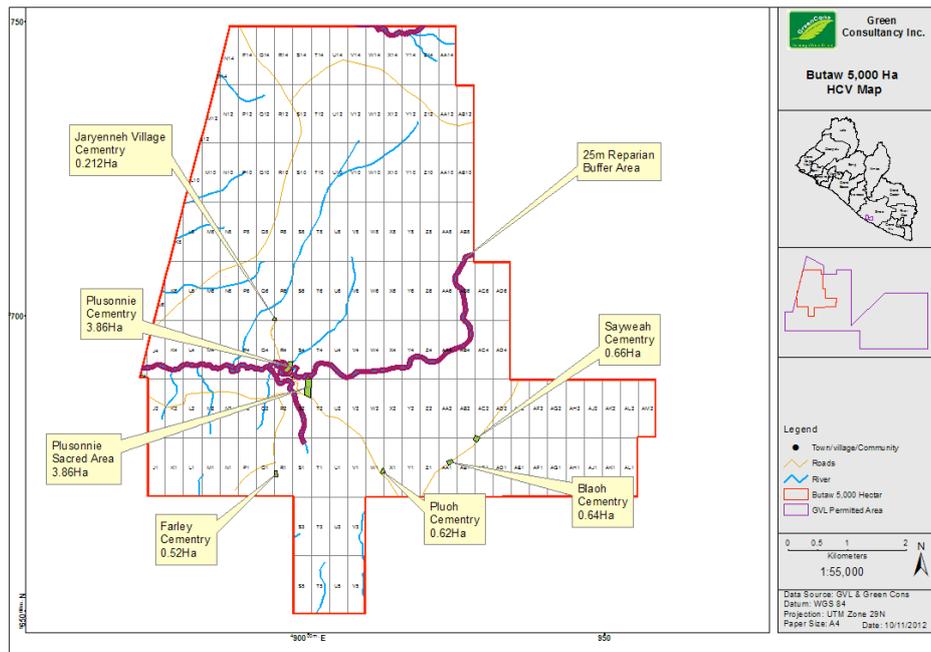
(Note: Custodians may not allow certain Shrines/Sacred Areas to be identified or precisely located on public maps; areas will be guided by authorized Environmental/Community team members only)



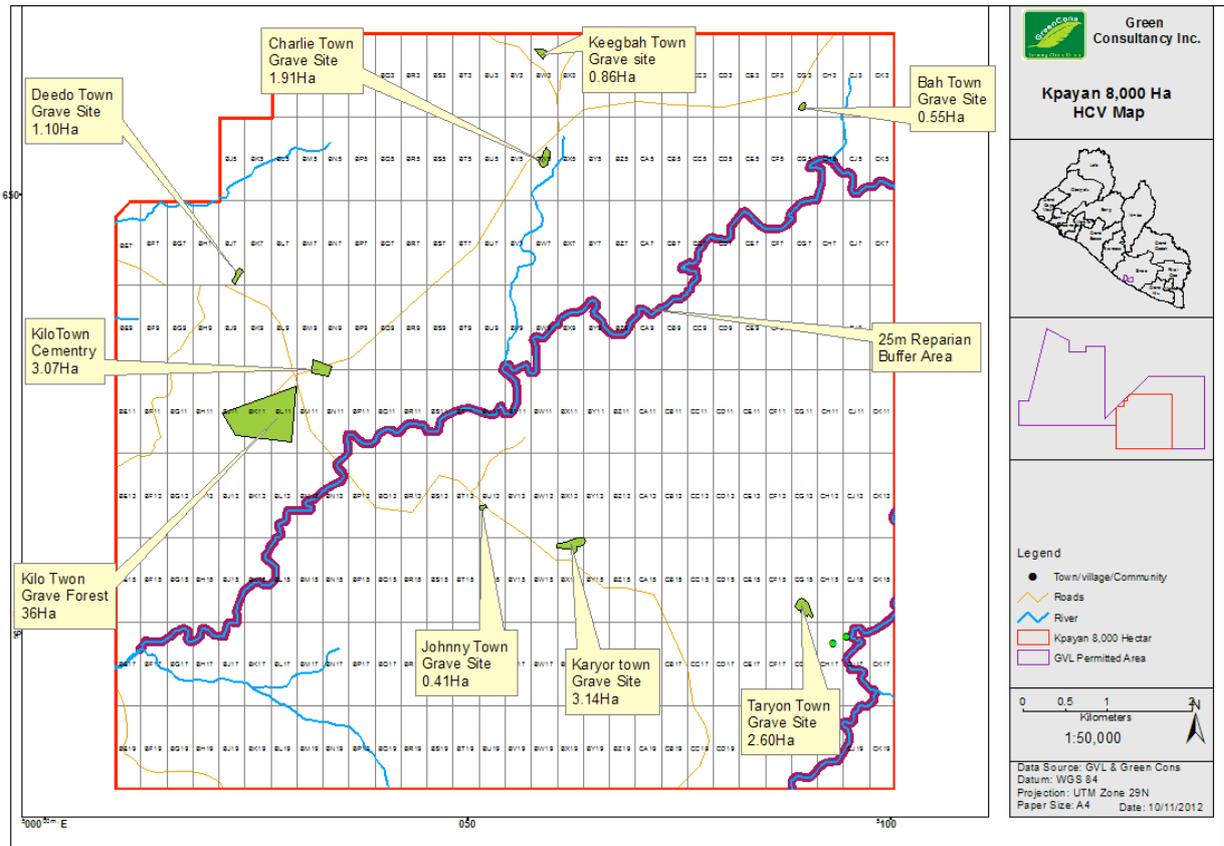
**RSPO NOTIFICATION OF PROPOSED NEW PLANTING**

**3.4.3 Cemeteries and Gravesites in Relation to Major Area Features**

Lost or unmaintained gravesites may not be identified by community members until during development as access and visibility improves. Maps and records are to be updated as new information is obtained. (Note that the following maps are formatted into grid references for reference and identification purposes. These are not planned operational areas)

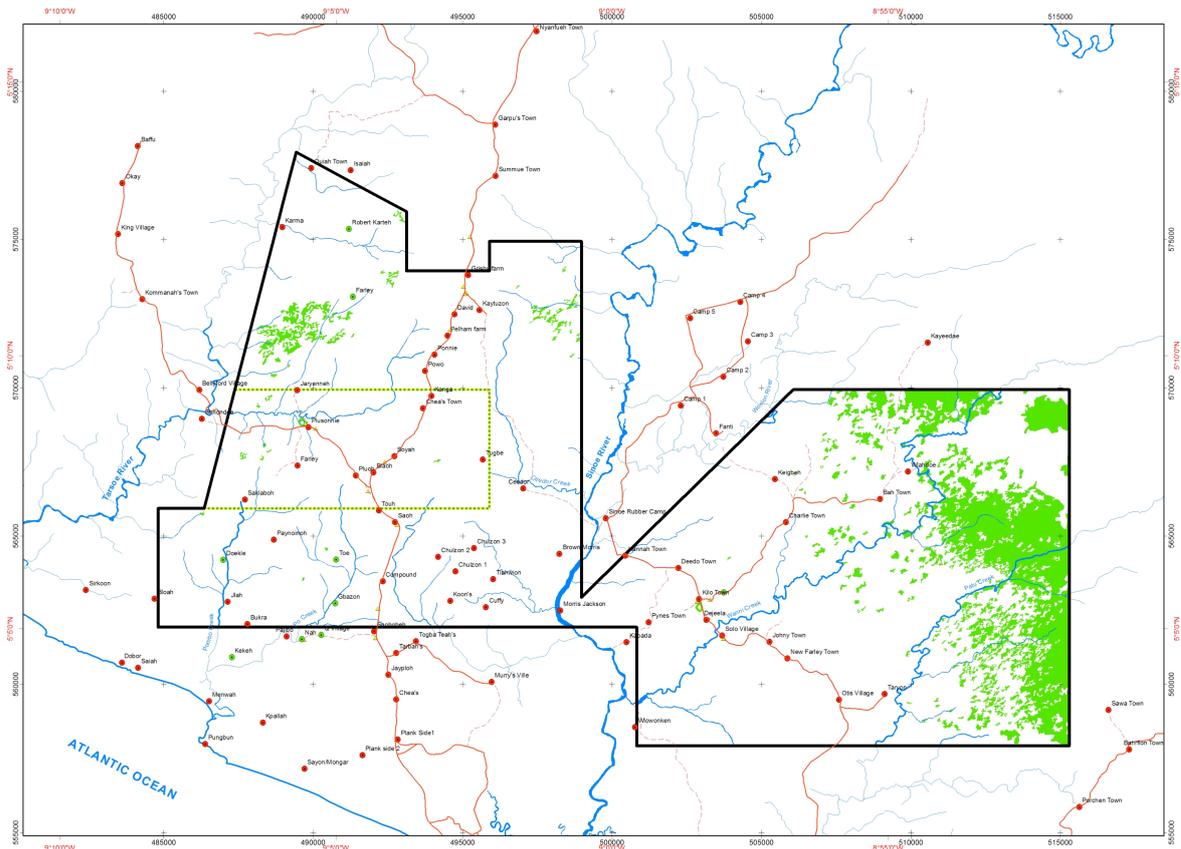


**RSPO NOTIFICATION OF PROPOSED NEW PLANTING**



### 3.4.4 Core Areas of Higher Density Forests

The areas do not contain Primary forest. Core areas of High Density secondary forests will be planned to be preserved, and also utilized for community traditional forest resources needs (gathering and materials, similar to riparian areas)



The company is reviewing lower density forest categories that may be further excluded from development or chosen for development in line with High Carbon Stock (HCS) preservation. Such determination will be made based on further assessments including with partners and stakeholders.

#### 4. VERIFICATION STATEMENT:

BSi has conducted a New Planting Procedure (NPP) desktop verification assessment commenced on 14 – 16 November 2012 alongside with Field verification assessment commenced on 27 November 2012 until 1 December 2012 for proposed scope of new development area of Golden Veroleum (Liberia) Inc [GVL]. The overall conclusion of the findings was Field activities of GVL started on December 3, 2010 subsequent to entirely relevant legal permits obtained; such as land compensation, nursery practices, land clearance, and transplanting the seedling into the field. Most current field activities up to date were considered the SEIA and HCV assessment documents prior to first stage of land clearances. The company was admitted to RSPO membership on August 28, 2011. The detail chronology and summary of SEIA and HCV assessments including summary of Management and Mitigations Plan are contained within the section of this notification on previous pages above.

Based on RSPO rulings through letter of February, 4<sup>th</sup> 2013 and electronic mail on February 20<sup>th</sup> 2013, it has been established that the developments begun prior to GVL's RSPO membership will be considered Ongoing New Plantings. Specifically RSPO Letter February 20<sup>th</sup> states:

*RSPO has deliberated on the GVL request/contention that the current Phase 1 development covering 20,000 ha within the 220,000 ha concession area in Liberia be considered as an 'ongoing development' under NPP definition. Taking into consideration the commencement date of the development before GVL RSPO membership, the Phase 1 development described above is considered as an 'ongoing planting'. Following the rules, such a development requires NPP submission but will only be for notification, not for public comment. All subsequent development phases within the same concession area are considered as new plantings, thus subjected to all NPP requirement where 30 day notification, including for public comments, are required. GVL is also advised to adhere to conditions stipulated by the Complaints Panel in resolving the existing conflicts.*

As to subject above, BSi concludes that the verification has been carried out in accordance of RSPO regulations and rulings and GVL is to comply with RSPO NPP on-going new planting and New Planting procedures as stated by RSPO.

**RSPO NOTIFICATION OF PROPOSED NEW PLANTING**

On behalf of:

BSI Group Singapore Pte Ltd



Aryo Gustomo

*Lead Auditor*

Golden Veroleum (Liberia) Inc



Matt Karinen

*Director*