



Wetlands for the Future Fund

Celebrating 20 years of the Conservation and Wise Use of Wetlands in Latin America, the Caribbean and Mexico



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Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands
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2017

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Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, 2017. Wetlands for the Future Fund - Celebrating 20 years of the Conservation and Wise Use of Wetlands in Latin America, the Caribbean and Mexico. Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, Gland, Switzerland.

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Cover photos: WFF/07/AR/2 - WFF/12/GT/1 - WFF/06/GT/1 - WFF/09/AR/2
WFF/07/PE/2

The photos used in this publication refer to projects financed by the Wetlands for the Future Fund.

Map: Mayra Martinez Silva

Translation: Sara Casallas and Sofia Suarez

This publication was made possible by the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



Acknowledgements

The Ramsar Secretariat is grateful to the Government of the United States through the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the continued support provided to the Wetlands for the Future Fund. Their support has been instrumental for the consolidation and continuity of the Fund.

The Secretariat also wishes to thank all those staff members who have supported the Fund management, including former Senior Advisors and interns for the Americas from 1996 to date.

Foreword

Twenty years ago, in 1996, the government of the United States of America through the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service envisioned an initiative to support the implementation of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in Latin America, the Caribbean and Mexico. The aim of Wetlands for the Future Fund was, and still is, the promotion of the implementation of Ramsar's concept of wise use of wetlands in the region by strengthening the capacity of countries to manage their wetlands and to help them integrate wetland conservation and management into the development process.

Today, wetlands still face many challenges that affect their conservation and wise use. This is why initiatives that support the implementation of the Convention on the ground such as this one are powerful tools. We therefore take this opportunity to celebrate and share with the Ramsar family, in the region and worldwide, the achievements of the Wetlands for the Future Fund during its first 20 years.

The successful experiences implemented in the region that are highlighted in this publication may be replicable in other countries. These experiences are also examples of cooperation between Contracting Parties and a wide range of stakeholders. They show how, through the operation of the Fund, countries can strengthen their implementation of Ramsar Strategic Plans and also help contribute to achieving the Aichi Targets as well as the goals and targets of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2010-2020 and the Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2015-2023.

We encourage all Contracting and Non Contracting Parties in Latin America, the Caribbean and Mexico to continue making use of the Wetlands for the Future Fund in order to contribute to the implementation of the Convention in their territories. Joint work and international cooperation can help ensure that we will be able to accomplish our objectives as a Convention to achieve the conservation and wise use of wetlands and to contribute to sustainable development for all.



Martha Rojas-Urrego
Secretary General
Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Executive summary | 9 |
| Introduction | 10 |
| Activities supported by the Fund and focus areas | 11 |
| Effectiveness and impact of the Fund | 14 |
| The Fund's relationship and contribution to the Ramsar Convention's Strategic Plan | 14 |
| Previous Strategic Plans | 14 |
| Contribution of the Fund to Ramsar Convention's 4th Strategic Plan 2016-2024 | 16 |
| Contribution to leveraging national-level synergies with other processes and Conventions | 17 |
| Implementation of projects in Latin America, the Caribbean and Mexico | 18 |
| Projects in Ramsar sites | 19 |
| Under-represented wetlands and threatened species | 22 |
| Projects by focus area | 24 |
| Training and Capacity Building | 25 |
| Awareness-Raising Activities | 35 |
| Documentation | 38 |
| Wetland Management and Tools | 42 |
| Academic and Research | 49 |
| Networking | 53 |
| Protection and Conservation of Priority Species | 56 |
| Conclusions | 60 |
| References | 61 |

Executive Summary

Since 1996, the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971), the U.S. Department of State, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have operated the Wetlands for the Future Fund (WFF) to benefit Latin American, Caribbean and Mexican institutions and individuals through capacity building and training in the conservation and wise use of wetlands. The Fund has also contributed to strengthening the capacity of Contracting Parties to manage their wetland resources highlighting the importance of the integration of the conservation and management of these vital ecosystems in the development process.

The achievements of the Fund have been reviewed and showcased through an assessment done ten years after the inception of the Fund in 2006 and a publication, in 2010, that highlighted the most successful projects and lessons learned in the first 14 years of the Fund.

To celebrate 20 years of the Fund's contribution to the management and wise use of wetlands in Latin America, the Caribbean and Mexico the Secretariat of the Convention along with the U.S Department of State and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service aim to showcase the impact of the Fund and its contribution to the implementation of the Convention and its Strategic Plans in the region.

To date, 276 projects have been implemented in 23 countries. Some of these projects are highlighted as examples that could be replicated in the region and more broadly within the worldwide Ramsar Family. Furthermore, information on these projects may also contribute to increasing the knowledge and management of wetlands in the region, since in many cases projects or information on activities in wetlands are not widely disseminated.

The Wetlands for the Future Fund has contributed many benefits over the past 20 years not only to support the implementation of the Convention in Latin America, the Caribbean and Mexico but also to strengthen capacities of Contracting Parties, national, local institutions, NGOs, International Organizations and academia in the conservation and wise use of wetlands.



Judith G. Garber, Acting Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of State and Martha Rojas-Urrego, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands Secretary General renewing the Memorandum of Understanding and marking 20 years of collaboration through the Wetlands for the Future Fund. September 2016.

Introduction

Since 1996, the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971), together with the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, have operated the Wetlands for the Future Fund (WFF) for the Western Hemisphere to benefit Latin American, Caribbean and Mexican institutions and individuals through capacity building and training in the conservation and wise use of wetlands. The Fund promotes the concept of wise use of wetlands through strengthening the capacity of countries to manage their wetland resources in perpetuity and to integrate wetland conservation and management in the development process.

As we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Fund we note the significance and impact of the Fund in supporting implementation of the objectives of the Convention and its Strategic Plan in Latin America, the Caribbean and Mexico.

Some of the most successful projects funded in the last 20 years, their outputs and lessons learned are presented here as they could be replicated in the region and worldwide, increasing the knowledge and management of wetlands. We believe that the Wetlands for the Future Fund will contribute to catalyzing similar actions in other Ramsar regions as we move forward in a global agenda where the conservation and wise use of wetlands are key to achieving a more sustainable world.





Activities supported by the Fund and focus areas

The Wetlands for the Future Fund promotes the implementation of the concept of wise use of wetlands through the strengthening of the capacity of Contracting Parties to manage their wetland resources in perpetuity and by contributing to the integration of wetland conservation and management with the development process. It aims to catalyze wetland activities currently underway or planned within the region, or complement existing training and education initiatives. The Fund provides assistance for projects that fall under any of the following categories:

1. Long and Short-term Training

The purpose of this category is to strengthen the capacities of institutions, practitioners and local communities in the management and conservation of wetland ecosystems through:

- a. The preparation of teaching materials and implementation of university-level courses on management and conservation of wetland ecosystems.
- b. The support for participation in wetland-related training courses.

- c. Graduate placement (for MSc and Ph.D. graduates who have specialized in wetlands and wish to start a wetland project upon returning to their own countries after graduation).

2. Practical Application of Ramsar Convention's Wise Use Concept and Guidelines

Through this category, the Fund aims to promote the application of the wise use concept by funding projects that provide:

- a. On-the-job training opportunities and internships for wetland managers, planners, academic, field and technical staff.
- b. Exchange opportunities for managers, planners, practitioners, technical and field staff from wise use sites to wetlands in other countries, particularly when such exchanges can contribute to training efforts under this initiative and/or the establishment of similar projects elsewhere.



- c. Hands-on (practical) training experience in wise use activities for members of local and indigenous wetland-dependent communities.
- d. Preparation of management plans and restoration strategies for wetlands, and conservation of vulnerable aquatic species.

3. Protected Area Personnel Training Programs

This category applies to projects that aim to develop and conduct reserve personnel programs in the fields of wetland management and wardening within the region or that aim to review current training curricula and/or strengthen existing training programs to enhance the wetland management aspects of the curriculum.

4. Information Management and Transfer

Projects funded through this category aim to promote information sharing and networking through documentation centers within the region.

5. Emergency Assistance

Contracting Parties may request emergency assistance for training in connection with wetland of regional importance or Ramsar sites which have suffered damage or are in imminent danger of damage as the result of technological developments, pollution, other human interference or natural phenomena such as hurricanes or drought. Such assistance may be made available to assess damages and to take actions to safeguard the site.

6. Preparatory Assistance

Countries that are not yet Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, but have clearly signalled their intention to accede, may apply for training and technical assistance grants from the WFF to support activities necessary for the identification, boundary delineation, and mapping of the first site to be included on the List of Wetlands of International Importance, as required for accession to the Ramsar Convention.



While all projects must fall under at least one of the above categories of assistance, they must also fall under at least one of the seven focus areas used to categorize projects according to the main activities for which the Fund provides assistance. These focus areas are Training and Capacity Building, Awareness Raising Activities, Documentation, Wetland Management and Tools, Academic and Research, Networking and Protection and Conservation of Priority Species.

1. Training & Capacity Building

This focus area includes projects that aim to provide technical training on wetlands mainly for technical staff of government institutions but also for communities and other stakeholders where people are trained to perform a specific activity such as processing fish products, marketing wetland handicrafts or engaging in ecotourism among others.

2. Awareness Raising Activities

This area includes school visits, campaigns involving the general public, and activities with indigenous groups among others. Moreover, academic events, documentation and training also contribute to raising the awareness of participants.

3. Documentation

This area includes the production of all books, CDs, handbooks, leaflets, posters and other reference materials. Visitor and wetland centers also fall under this focus area.

4. Wetland Management & Tools

This focus area includes projects related to infrastructure and equipment, baseline and monitoring data about the characteristics of a site, guidance documents (e.g., management plans, policies and consensus documents), maps, software and databases. This includes preparation of management plans and restoration strategies for Ramsar Sites and other wetlands.

5. Academic & Research

This area includes data collection and/or processing and analysis of data into useable information or information products that are then made readily available to the entity that provided the data and through specialized journals and theses.

6. Networking

This focus area relates to any initiative aimed at establishing or strengthening linkages between specialized or non-specialized groups. In addition to the usual multi-stakeholder meetings and congresses, tools such as e-newsletters, virtual fora and joint (regional) initiatives are also included.

7. Protection and Conservation of Priority Species

This area covers any initiative that aims to protect and conserve vulnerable/endangered/protected aquatic species such as: habitat protection, protection of nests and reproductive females, development of institutional capacity for conservation of species, development of measures to address threats, amongst others.



WFF/12/CL/2



Effectiveness and impact of the Fund

The Fund's relationship and contribution to the Ramsar Convention's Strategic Plan

Previous Strategic Plans

The Wetlands for the Future Fund clearly contributed to the direct or indirect implementation of the Convention's Strategic Plans 2003-2008 and 2009-2015 in four of its five General Objectives. Although the Fund focused primarily on Goal 4 through ongoing communication, education, awareness and training activities, it is linked to other goals. For example, these activities contributed to the implementation of the concept of wise use of wetlands and the involvement of local communities in the process. In addition, they supported other goals such as strengthening wetland policies and management plans (Goal 1), the inclusion of wetlands in the List of Wetlands of International Importance (Goal 2), and the creation of forums to exchange expert information and support regional initiatives (Goal 3). Table 1 shows the contribution of each focus area of the Fund to the various General Objectives of the Strategic Plan 2003-2008, as well as to the Strategic Plan 2009-2015.



WFF/12/MX/3



| General Objectives Strategic Plan | Operational Objectives Strategic Plan 2003-2008 | Strategies Strategic Plan 2009-2015 | Focus Area |
|--|---|---|-------------------------------|
| General Objective 1. The wise use of wetlands | Operational Objective 1. Inventory and Assessment. | Strategy 1.1 Wetland Inventory and assessment | WMT |
| | Operational Objective 2. Policies and legislation, including Impact Assessment and Valuation. | Strategy 1.3 Policy, legislation and institutions | TCB, WMT, |
| | Operational Objective 3. Integration of wetland Wise Use into Sustainable Development. | Strategy 1.4 Cross-sectoral recognition of wetland services | TCB, AwR, DOC, AcRe, |
| | Operational Objective 6. Local communities, indigenous people and cultural values. | Strategy 1.6 Science-based management of wetlands | TCB, AwR, WMT |
| | Operational Objective 7. Private Sector involvement. | Strategy 1.2 Global Wetland information Strategy 1.10 Private sector | TCB, AwR, DOC, WMT, AcRe, NET |
| General Objective 2. Wetlands of International Importance | Operational Objective 11. Management planning and monitoring of Ramsar Sites. | Strategy 2.4 Ramsar site ecological character | WMT |
| General Objective 3. International cooperation | Operational Objective 12. Management of shared water resources, wetlands and wetland species. | Strategy 3.2 Regional initiatives | NET |
| | Operational Objective 14. Sharing of expertise and information | Strategy 3.4 Sharing information and expertise | AcRe, NET |
| General Objective 4. Implementation capacity | Operational Objective 9. Communication, education, and public awareness (CEPA) | Strategy 1.4 Cross-sectoral recognition of wetland services | TCB, AwR, DOC, AcRe, NET |
| | Operational Objective 20. Training | Strategy 4.1 CEPA | |

Key: TCB – Training & Capacity Building; AwR – Awareness Raising; DOC – Documentation; WMT – Wetland Management and Tools; AcRe – Academic & Research; NET – Networking.

Table 1. Contribution of each focus area of the Fund to the various General Objectives of the Strategic Plan 2003-2008 and 2009-2015.



Contribution of the Fund to Ramsar Convention's 4th Strategic Plan 2016-2024

Through Resolution XII.2 the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands approved the 4th Strategic Plan 2016-2024 at the 12th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Punta del Este, Uruguay. As the Convention moves forward, the Wetlands for the Future Fund will contribute to the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2016-2024, particularly through Operational Goal 4: Enhancing implementation, specifically through capacity building to strengthen the implementation of the Ram-

sar Convention on Wetlands in the Americas. It will also contribute to Goals 1: Addressing the drivers of wetland loss and degradation; 2: Effectively conserving and managing the Ramsar site network; and 3: Wisely using all wetlands. The expected contribution of the thematic areas of the Wetlands for the Future Fund to key targets of Ramsar Convention on Wetlands 4th Strategic Plan is shown in Figure 1.

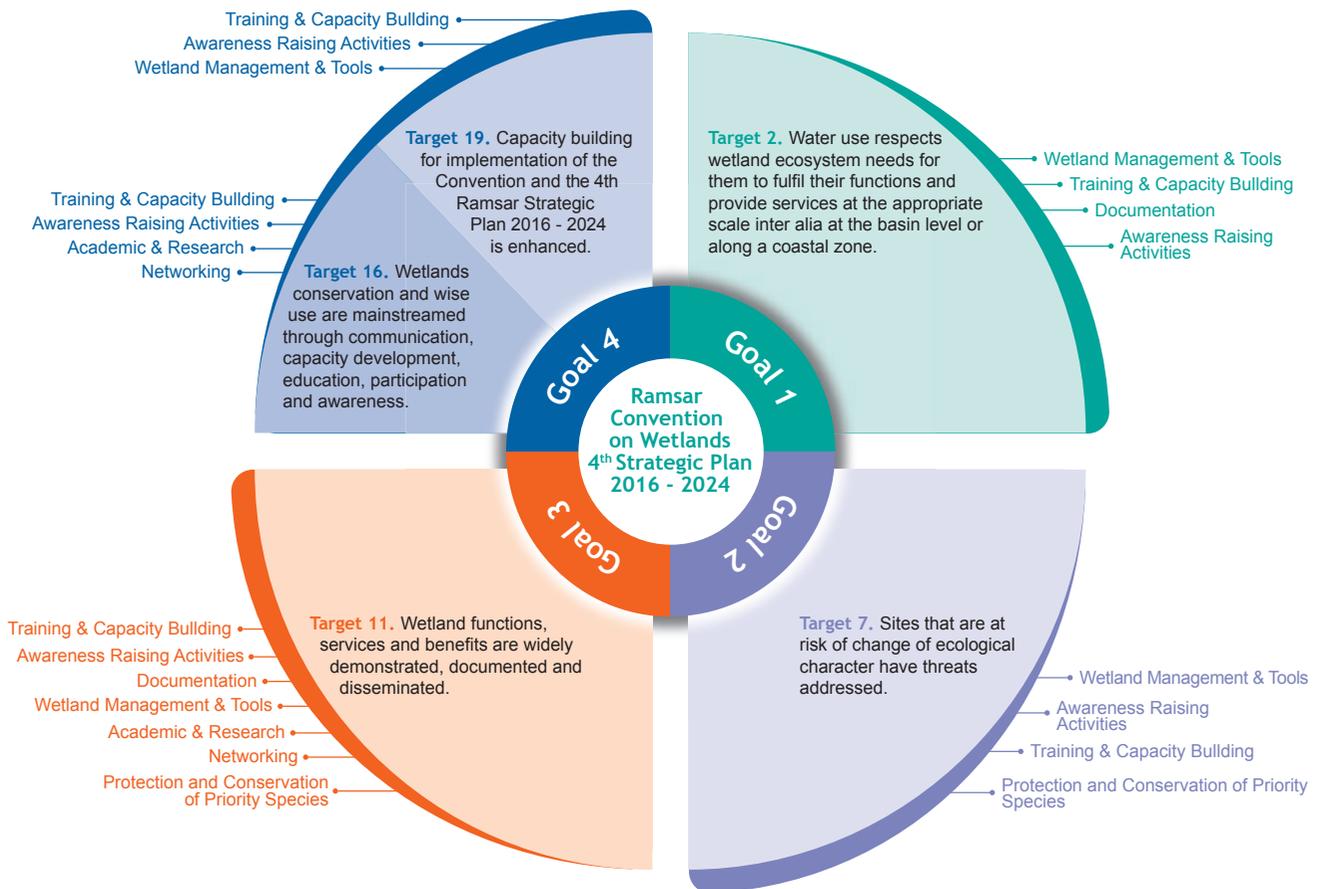


Figure 1. Contribution of the Wetlands for the Future Fund thematic areas to key targets of Ramsar Convention on Wetlands 4th Strategic Plan.





Contribution to leveraging national-level synergies with other processes and Conventions

Parties' efforts to implement the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands can simultaneously contribute to achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Aichi Targets, as well as to leverage synergies at the national level for implementing other biodiversity related Conventions such as the World Heritage Convention, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS).

Box 1

Community training for making handicrafts as an alternative to reduce predation on sea turtles *Lepidochelys olivacea*

This community focused project is an example of how the Fund provides support to Parties to implement Ramsar by conserving their wetlands and wetland species while also helping them to implement other biodiversity related Conventions. The project aimed to train people from two local communities in sea turtle themed alternative income options. The Institute of Natural History and Ecology worked with the communities of Las Lupes and Barra Zacapulco, where harvesting of sea turtle eggs (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) is commonly practiced. This species is included in appendix I of CITES which relates to species threatened with extinction and therefore their trade is only allowed in exceptional circumstances. It is also listed in appendix I of CMS relating to endangered migratory species. Furthermore, projects that promote the conservation of this species contribute to achieving Aichi Target 12. Through the project, communities actively participated in workshops and then women worked in groups to manufacture a range of handicrafts. Overall, 40 women of Barra Zacapulco and Las Lupes were trained in handcraft manufacturing with recycled materials; 32 youth and women received training in T-shirt painting with natural dyes; 20 women were trained in preparing fish and seafood-based dishes and 25 restaurant owners were trained in tourism services. The considerable decline in the harvesting of sea turtle eggs and the successful participation of residents in the project showed the positive attitude and increased awareness of the communities.





WFF/06/MX/1

Implementation of projects in Latin America, the Caribbean and Mexico

Throughout its 20 years of implementation, the Wetlands for the Future Fund has contributed to the implementation of the Convention in the region. During this period, projects have been funded in 23 of the 27 Contracting Parties eligible for funding in the Americas. Over 538 proposals were received and of these, 276 projects have been funded representing 51.3% of all proposals submitted. More than 15,000 people have participated in the projects and of those, approximately 8,300 have received training through the Fund.

Figure 2 shows the number of projects that have been funded per country. In addition, 47 “regional and other” projects have been funded in the region which include short-term projects (e.g. support for publication and printing of books), multi-country projects, regional workshops and support to professionals to attend courses and workshops related to wetlands.

A number of countries have regularly submitted proposals to the Fund and have secured funding for a greater number of projects. These include Argentina (54), Colombia (29), Costa Rica (25), Brazil (20), Mexico (18), Peru (14), Guatemala (13), Ecuador (12) and Chile (12).

Contracting Parties like the Dominican Republic, Honduras, and Trinidad & Tobago are encouraged

to consider the opportunities provided by the Fund and to explore submitting more proposals to the Secretariat. Contracting Parties such as Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados and Grenada have not submitted any proposals and are encouraged as well to submit proposals to the Fund.

The Fund is meant to serve all eligible Contracting and Non-Contracting Parties in Latin America, the Caribbean and Mexico and countries that have not submitted many or that have never submitted a proposal are warmly welcomed to do so.

Regarding the distribution of projects within the different focus areas, of the 276 projects funded over the last 20 years, 141 have had a Training and Capacity Building component, 120 an Awareness Raising component and 147 also fall under the Documentation focus area. Furthermore, 118 fall under the Wetland Management and Tools area, 99 under the Academic and Research area, 69 have had a Networking component and 9 also fall under the Protection and Conservation of Species focus area. Most projects have comprehensive approaches and often fall under multiple focus areas. The fact that implementers do not limit projects to one specific area speaks of the need in the region for projects with integral approaches and of the Fund’s complementarity among the focus areas.



Projects in Ramsar sites

The Wetlands for the Future Fund seeks to promote the conservation and wise use of all wetlands in Latin America and the Caribbean as well as in Mexico. However, since 2002, priority has been given to projects taking place in wetlands that have been designated as Wetlands of International Importance by the Contracting Parties to the Convention. Projects have been carried out in 80 Ramsar Sites (20%) out of the 402 Ramsar sites in Latin America, the Caribbean and Mexico. In some cases, more than one project has been implemented per Ramsar site. Figure 2 shows the Ramsar sites where Wetlands for the Future projects have been implemented. Furthermore, projects have also been implemented in sites with multiple designations such as World Heritage Sites (Box 2) or Biosphere Reserves.

The Fund has contributed to awareness raising activities, site management training, Communication, Education Participation and Awareness (CEPA) ac-

tivities, and conservation programs in Ramsar sites where projects have been carried out. In addition, activities have included, inter alia, creation of databases, wildlife inventories, installation of visitor centers, and restoration of sites that have undergone changes in their ecological characteristics. Projects have also been implemented in wetlands to provide support in the designation process and in compiling information to complete the Ramsar Information Sheets to include sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance. Such is the case in the sites of Lagunas de Guanacache, Lagunas de Vilama, and Humedales de Península Valdés (Box 2) in Argentina, Estrella Fluvial del Inírida in Colombia, Banco Chinchorro Biosphere Reserve, National Park Arrecife de Puerto Morelos, as well as watersheds and coral reefs in the coastal zone of Huatulco in Mexico, Wetlands System of San Miguelito in Nicaragua, and the Lucre-Huacarpay Wetland in Peru.



Figure 2. Ramsar sites where Wetlands for the Future projects have been implemented as well as number of funded projects per country.



Box 2

Importance of Patagonian coastal wetlands as critical sites for the survival of shorebirds. Towards strong awareness-raising action aimed at communities and government agencies and intermediate organizations

This project, developed by the Centro Nacional Patagónico (CENPAT) focused on Patagonian wetlands, particularly in the Península Valdés area, a World Heritage Site. The project was carried out in two phases related to academic and knowledge transfer activities. The initial phase of the project highlighted the importance of Patagonian coastal wetlands for the survival of migratory shorebirds. Activities included workshops, courses, internships and a graduate thesis. Through these activities the project contributed to raising awareness of the importance of the conservation and wise use of these ecosystems among the general public, provincial and local government officials, NGOs, students, teachers and technical and administrative staff involved in protected area management.

A wide range of materials were also produced to facilitate the dissemination and transfer of information. Considering the Valdés Peninsula receives on average 70,000 to 100,000 tourists, the distribution of high quality materials is key to raising awareness among the general public. The materials were produced with inputs and themes developed in the courses and workshops and include an interactive multimedia CD, a leaflet, a booklet and manuals. In addition, a website was developed to showcase the project (www.humedalesdelsur.com.ar).

The second phase continued building on the aims of the first phase of the project and additional objectives included the establishment of the technical bases to propose the wetlands of the Valdés Peninsula as a Ramsar site and strengthening the continuity of the project. During the second phase, the project moved to a more

regional scope extending the study areas and the reach of the dissemination components. Academic activities during this phase were aimed at training 10 university students as well as increasing laboratory resources and equipment while capacity building activities included 25 workshops and conferences for different interest groups. These activities took place in multiple cities across the provinces in Patagonia. Over 140 stakeholders involved in the decision making process and management of natural protected areas participated in the workshops and 650 people participated in the conferences. Through this work, relations have been strengthened with NGOs, protected area agencies and the governments of the provinces of Chubut and Tierra del Fuego.

The materials produced during this phase include a book titled “Humedales costeros y aves playeras” [Coastal wetlands and shorebirds] which was widely distributed. All materials are also available online in the project’s website, which has also proven to be an important tool for the dissemination of information. Additionally, specific materials were developed for primary school children.

The lessons learned from the project highlight the difficulty of collecting information and the need for workshops and training in remote and scarcely populated areas of Patagonia. Furthermore, in both the first and second phases, the need to continue the project was identified and remains one of their goals.

In 2012, some of the wetland areas of Península Valdés were designated as the Ramsar site “Humedales de Península Valdés”.



WFF/04/AR/4 and WFF/07/AR/4





WFF/09/AR/3

Under-represented wetlands and threatened species

Under-represented types of wetlands in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance such as peatlands, grasslands, mangroves, coral reefs, karst systems and sea grass beds among others have gathered special attention under the Convention. Target 6 of the 2016-2024 Ramsar Strategic Plan relates to the designation of Ramsar sites, in particular under-represented wetlands. Previous Strategic Plans have also made reference to the need to include these types of wetlands in the Ramsar List. In line with the above, the Wetlands for the Future Fund has prioritized projects in these types of wetlands resulting in 46 projects funded in mangroves, coral reefs and coastal ecosystems. These projects include awareness raising activities on the importance of mangroves and coral reefs, monitoring activities in coral reefs, monitoring and awareness raising on the importance of conserving endangered species and training on alternative livelihoods options among others (Box 3). Furthermore, 17 projects have been funded in High Andean Wetlands, another type of under-represented wetlands.

Threatened species have also been prioritized by the Fund through the inclusion of a specific focus area for their protection and conservation. Promoting the conservation of these species is key to maintaining the ecological character of Ramsar sites and other wetlands that support them. This is especially related to targets 5 and 7 of the current Ramsar Strategic Plan which are related to the maintenance of the ecological character of Ramsar sites.



Box 3

Education and environmental awareness raising for the conservation of mangroves and coral reefs in the Ramsar sites 1321 Cuencas y Corales de la Zona Costera de Huatulco and 1821 Barra de la Cruz, Oaxaca, Mexico

This project was done in collaboration with various institutions including the National Commission for Protected Areas (CONANP) through the Management of the Huatulco National Park, the Playas Limpias Committee of Santa Maria Huatulco and Costasalvaje. The aim of the project was to build capacity, raise awareness and develop visual and educational materials on issues related to the conservation and wise use of wetlands in order to stop and reduce the degradation of mangroves and coral reefs through participatory management actions in the catchment area of the Ramsar sites Cuencas y Corales de la Zona Costera de Huatulco and Barra de la Cruz. The project was aimed at stakeholders from various groups such as tourism service providers, local communities, government agencies and civil society organizations that benefit from the Ramsar sites.

Over 300 people participated in 10 workshops that had theory and practical components. Throughout the workshops participants and implementers identified environmental needs and solutions for each sector. This resulted in an agreement among all the sectors involved with proposals to move forward in the conservation and wise use of the Ramsar sites. The agreement was endorsed at a meeting of the State Council for Coastal Wetlands of Oaxaca.

Visual and educational materials produced included:

-Two videos, one for each of the Ramsar sites, highlighting their importance.

-Two short videos, one on wetlands and the Convention and one on coral reefs.

-Two illustrated leaflets on mangroves and coral reefs

-A training manual with the documents used for the workshops and the results.

All materials included a logo using two emblematic species: the purple sea snail (*Plicopurpura pansa*) and Leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) which is in Appendix I of CITES and CMS.

Furthermore, an existing trail in one of the Ramsar sites was restored and signage was produced with information provided by the tourism services providers that participated in the workshops. This new interpretative trail will raise the profile of the site and will attract tourists, thus providing opportunities for more sustainable livelihood options.

This project was successful above expectations. For example, the number of people trained was double the number originally planned and the videos have also been seen more than a 1,000 times (on youtube and facebook). Additionally, the workshops were well received among the different sectors and it was clear that people recognize environmental issues even if they have limited knowledge of how the ecosystems work. The positive impact of the project was evident throughout all the activities, the results and the enthusiasm of participants.



Projects by focus area

This section contains a selection of some of the projects implemented under each focus area in order to highlight the benefits generated by the Fund. Projects were selected based on the following criteria: a) successful completion of the project and fulfillment of all the requirements outlined in the operational guidelines, b) quality of the materials and technical reports, c) contribution of the projects to the wise use of wetlands. Some of the selected projects fall under several focus areas but they have been classified under the most relevant one.

Training and Capacity Building

All projects in this section aim to provide technical training on wetlands and strength country capacities on wetlands management. Although the standard recipients are field staff and government bureaucrats, instances where lay people are trained to perform a specific activity such as processing fish products, marketing wetland handicrafts or engaging in ecotourism activities are also included here.



WFF/09/AR/2



Implementing Organization:
Asociación Civil
Conservación Patagónica

Conservation of nesting and feeding sites for waterbirds in the Ramsar site Natural Protected Area El Tromen

The Ramsar site where this project took place is home to more than 90 species of birds, 37 of which are waterbirds. The project aimed to contribute to the conservation of these birds through restoration and monitoring of critical habitats within the site as well as awareness raising activities and the promotion of birdwatching tourism.

To achieve the objectives of the project a number of activities were carried out. For the conservation and restoration of nesting sites, the activities included workshops with local farmers and fencing of important nesting and feeding areas and workshops to develop and implement a comprehensive monitoring program. Awareness raising activities included workshops and exchange experiences for teachers and park rangers on the education tool “Educación de la Ecología en el Patio de la Escuela” (Ecology education in the schoolyard) and on the importance of the Ramsar Site, workshops and field visits to the Ramsar Site for students and training workshops for local communities on tourism services related to birdwatching activities.

Materials were also produced throughout the project such as the monitoring manual, handbooks on the ecological and cultural importance of the site, radio spots and leaflets for awareness raising of the larger population and other materials used during the different workshops. Furthermore, an existing trail was

restored and turned into an self-guided interpretative birdwatching trail with new and improved signage.

Key Outcomes

One of the most significant achievements of the project is the establishment of monitoring practices that have provided the basis for the development of monitoring programs in eight other protected areas in the Argentinian province of Neuquén. These programs provide essential information for the decision making and planning process for the activities that can take place within the Ramsar site.

The project was also successful in the restoration of nesting and feeding sites as well as in raising awareness and increasing the involvement of important stakeholders. These included teachers, students, park rangers, farmers and local communities in general that live in or around the Ramsar site. Overall, the project reached over 300 people that benefit from the Ramsar site.

Lessons Learned

The implementing organization has identified two major lessons learned. The first being the importance of monitoring systems that provide reliable information to evaluate the effectiveness of conservation actions. The second, is the importance of the involvement of local communities in conservation projects.





Implementing Organization:
Mater Natura



Strengthening and consolidation of the National Wetlands Committee

The Brazilian National Wetlands Committee started its activities in 2005. Between 2005 and 2009, the Committee was only able to meet four times due to the limited availability of staff to coordinate the meetings and processes. The aim of this project was to improve the functioning and consolidation of the committee by providing platforms for cross sectoral coordination, increasing governance on the conservation and wise use of wetlands, increasing awareness of the importance of wetlands, creating technical panels to advise on different issues and increasing the involvement at the scientific and technical level on wetland conservation and wise use issues.

Key Outcomes

As part of the activities, meetings of the National Wetlands Committee were organized as well as the first Technical Meeting of Managers of Ramsar Sites. Furthermore, there was a training workshop and exchange opportunities for site managers. Other activities included the production of documents to help with the implementation of the Convention such as including wetlands aspects in the document "Management of Integrated Water Resources Coastal Management, including wetlands". Concept papers on

the Convention targeted at different levels of government were also produced.

Key technical panels were identified as well as their composition, objectives and functioning. As of 2010 two panels were created on Criteria for Ramsar site designation and another one on Coral reefs. One of the most important outputs of the panels is the map of priority areas for conservation of wetlands and their ranking.

Lessons Learned

The implementers of the project have highlighted the importance of the involvement of Ramsar site managers in helping to understand how to approach the problems at each site. They hope that the project becomes the basis for a more effective National Wetlands Committee providing increasing support to the implementation of the Convention in Brazil.





WFF/12/CL/2



Chile

Implementing Organization:
Corporación Nacional
Forestal (CONAF)

Strengthening institutional capacity related to wetland monitoring within the National System for Wild Protected Areas

The Corporación Nacional Forestal (CONAF) manages the National System for Wild Protected Areas of Chile (SNASPE). Through this project, CONAF strengthened the institutional capacity of SNASPE with respect to wetland monitoring by establishing a monitoring protocol, applying it in pilot areas and training CONAF personnel on its application and finally printing and distributing it among stakeholders. The project, which also had the support from the faculty of Forestry and Natural Sciences from the Universidad de Chile, was key to increasing the level of attention given to wetlands within the SNASPE and to the identification of specific areas that also need to be strengthened.

A monitoring manual was developed based on a compilation and evaluation of current methodologies being used in the country followed by a workshop to design the manual taking into account that it needed to be practical, economical and with a diverse application to different kinds of protected areas.

The last stage of the project focused on the dissemination of the results of the project through meetings with neighboring communities of the national reserves where the monitoring took place. At the national level the project was presented to the National Wetlands Committee. The monitoring manual was also published and copies were given to regional offices of CONAF as well as to relevant local and national stakeholders.

Key Outcomes

One of the main results of the project is the development of the monitoring manual “Manual para el establecimiento de programas de monitoreo de humedales insertos en el Sistema Nacional de Áreas Silvestres Protegidas del Estado de Chile (SNASPE)” (Manual for establishing monitoring programs for wetlands within the System of National Wild Protected Areas of Chile (SNASPE)).

Furthermore, 27 wetland specialists from CONAF were trained and participated in the development and validation stages of the manual. To test the monitoring protocol, it was applied in pilot areas that included Laguna Matanzas, which is within the El Yali Ramsar site, Laguna Torca and Laguna Hermosa. In addition to the manual and its application, the project supported the purchase of multiparameter equipment need to measure water quality parameters during monitoring.

Lessons Learned

The implementers highlighted that the Fund has given CONAF and Chile the opportunity to move forward in setting up baselines for planning in general and for monitoring the health of wetlands in order to identify threats and address them in a timely and adequate manner.





Implementing Organization:
Centro Ecuatoriano de
Derecho Ambiental (CEDA)
and the Ministry of
Environment



WFF/06/EC/2

Training based on a review of legislation and institutions related to wetlands management in Ecuador

The project developed by the Centro Ecuatoriano de Derecho Ambiental (CEDA) and the Ministry of Environment focused on reviewing and evaluating laws and institutions based on the guidelines provided by Ramsar. The aim of the project was to advance the implementation of the wise use of wetlands after reviewing and evaluating relevant laws and institutions and train stakeholders to effectively apply existing policies and measures and change them when necessary. This was also done in coordination with policies regarding other relevant Conventions such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

The project included eleven activities for the identification and evaluation of the legal and institutional framework. The activities applied directly and indirectly to wetland management in Ecuador in order to make recommendations for legal and institutional reforms. Experts met during three workshops in Quito, Guayaquil and Cuenca. Preliminary results

were evaluated at two other workshops. Following the review process, five workshops took place to train public and private actors which included government agencies, academia and civil society organizations. Overall, 161 people participated in the workshops.

Key Outcomes

A knowledge base of relevant legal and institutional measures was established and strengthened with the feedback of wetland experts. A legal report, which includes a series of recommendations for supporting the conservation and wise use of wetlands was then produced.

The results of the process were published under the title "La Convención de Ramsar en el Ecuador: Guía sobre la conservación y el uso racional de los humedales" [The Ramsar Convention in Ecuador: Guidelines on the conservation and wise use of wetlands. The results were also posted on the CEDA website (www.ceda.org.ec).



Lessons Learned

Through this project the implementers found that the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands is the legal foundation for national legislation and policies concerning wetlands in Ecuador. It is also a significant influence on national environmental policies especially in the national constitutional system that explicitly refers to the protection of wetlands as fragile ecosystems and to an integrated management of water resources from an ecosystem approach.

The project also highlighted the efforts made by Ecuador to meet the commitments made under the Convention. This includes the designation of 13 Ramsar sites and the establishment of a national institutional framework responsible for implementing the Convention as well as national policies and strategies for the Conservation and wise use of wetlands.





WFF/01/PAR/2



Implementing Organization:
Fundación Moisés Bertoni

Dissemination, awareness-raising and training in specific sectors of society on wetlands issues as a strategy for consolidating the national wetlands committee in Paraguay

Through this project, the Moisés Bertoni Foundation developed a series of workshops and activities that have been important in raising awareness of the wetland conservation issues in Paraguay. A large number of people from different areas have been trained, including teachers, students, politicians and decision-makers. The workshops took place in the capital Asunción as well as in other cities also providing the first opportunity for dialogue with the communities in the area in or around the Lago Ypoa Ramsar site with respect to the conservation problems of the area.

Other activities included a forum on Communication, Education and Public Awareness-Raising that had 115 participants and activities within the framework of the World Wetlands Day celebration. In addition, support was provided for the International workshop “Aspectos de la problemática y manejo de los humedales de la Ecorregión de Ñeembucú” [Aspects of the problems and management of the Ñeembucú wetlands ecoregion]. This workshop focused on topics such as environmental ethics, wetland ecology, identification of wetland flora and fauna, the role of the National Wetlands Committee and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands among others. Overall, over 300 people participated in the project, including university students, teachers, private owners and public officials of the Ministry of the Environment.

The materials produced include a proposal document for a National Wetlands Policy and a book entitled “Hume-

dales del Paraguay” [Wetlands of Paraguay]. Also, documents on the National Wetlands Committee and on the Ramsar Convention were distributed among teachers in several schools, university students, local politicians and decision-makers of the Ministry of the Environment.

Key Outcomes

The activities performed during the project helped to raise awareness of local actors and to strengthen the National Wetlands Committee of Paraguay. In addition, there has been a significant increase in proposals and projects related to wetlands as a result of increased awareness among some civil society organizations who have identified these ecosystems as an opportunity to meet their conservation goals.

Lessons Learned

One of the most important lessons learned from the implementation of the project was that wetland issues have gained importance among various sectors, especially the non-profit sector. With improved management of wetland resources as promoted by some of these organizations, greater progress in the conservation and sustainable use of these ecosystems will be achieved. However, the project also highlighted the limited participation by the State, academia and individuals due to limitations in access to information.





Policies and institutions for wetlands management: training for managers from the insular Caribbean

This project arose from the concern of identified threats to Caribbean wetlands which in turn threaten livelihoods in the region. Through the project, CANARI aimed to analyze the actual and potential role of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in contributing to integrated management of wetlands in Jamaica, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago. The analysis and training components of the project were done through workshops with the participation of a number of key stakeholders from the region. They include wetland management practitioners from Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago, including government and civil society representatives as well as Ramsar Focal points. The project concluded with a regional workshop on Policies and Institutions for Participatory Wetlands Management: Lessons from the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in the insular Caribbean.

The results were disseminated online through CANARI's website (www.canari.org) and physically through the distribution of copies of the Policy Brief. It was sent to policymakers, Ramsar focal points, wetland management agencies and key civil society actors for a broader distribution. Additionally, the report was circulated at the regional meeting of the Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds (July 2007, Puerto Rico), the Training for Trainers workshop of CANARI/FAO (August 2007, Trinidad) and other workshops and regional and national conferences.

Key Outcomes

Attendees were trained on institutional and policy analysis for wetland management.

A policy brief was also produced for the project, which summarizes the main findings from workshops and national consultations. It also gives an overview of wetlands in the Caribbean, participatory management and the challenges for effective management.

This project involved countries such as Dominica and St. Kitts and Nevis which are not yet Parties to the Convention. In this regard, one of the main outcomes of the project was the heightened motivation to facilitate dialogue about the potential value of acceding to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the possible application of Ramsar mechanisms.

Lessons Learned

Some of the lessons learned highlight the unique position of Caribbean countries with respect to other countries in the Americas. For example, caution must be exercised in determining if the Ramsar mechanisms and participatory approaches for wetland management can be applied in local and national contexts in the region. In the case of National Wetland Committees, these were deemed appropriate for larger islands such as Jamaica, but for smaller islands it might be more appropriate to have a single committee dealing with all natural resource management and international Conventions.



WFF/02/GUY/1



Implementing Organization:
Environmental Protection
Agency

Participatory assistance for Guyana's accession to the Ramsar Convention

The development of this project reflects the efforts made by Guyana to accede to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and to recognize the importance of conserving and wisely using the wetlands within their territory. The aim of the project was to increase the capacity of government environmental agencies and NGO partners in the integrated management of Guyana's wetlands and to provide technical assistance in the identification of Guyana's first site in order to accede to the Convention. The activities under this project included training and planning workshops on wetland issues and on the implications of acceding to the Convention as well as on the integration of the concept of wise use into Guyana's national integrated environmental management framework.

The activities were divided into two workshops. The first one focused on wetlands management and included an introduction to the Ramsar Convention and modules on the values of wetlands, floodplain river fisheries management, adaptive management, collaborative management of wetland resources and wetland institutions, policies and laws in Guyana. The second workshop focused on wetlands strategic planning.

Key Outcomes

As a result of the workshops, six priority wetlands for designation were identified. In addition, an Interim Wetlands Strategic Plan for Guyana was prepared, which set out the plan to follow in order to accede to the Convention as well as a long term plan for subsequent action.

The main outcomes of the project include the preparation of the necessary documents for accession as well as the Ramsar Information Sheet for Guyana's first Ramsar site.



Awareness-Raising Activities

This focus area includes projects providing non-technical information to all groups within society. School visits, campaigns involving the general public, and activities with indigenous groups all fall into this category. Academic events, documentation and training also contribute to raising participant awareness.



WFF/09/CO/2



Implementing Organization:
World Wildlife Fund (WWF)
Colombia

Estrella Fluvial Inírida: a new Ramsar site in Colombia

The Estrella Fluvial Inírida is an area located in the Orinoco watershed. One of the most important watersheds on the planet, it is rich in biodiversity and hydrological values. The area was identified in 2004 as a priority wetland for conservation and in 2007 national and regional authorities, with the support of WWF, started the process to declare it a Ramsar site. They completed the ecological and socio-economic characterization of the area and identified that it is located within the territory of 20 indigenous communities of the Puinave and Curripaco groups. Through the project, the consultation process with the indigenous groups was completed. It therefore supported the participation of local indigenous communities in the designation process and the management plan development process. It also strengthened the institutional capacity of national environmental authorities such as the Ministry of Environment, regional authorities and National Parks, particularly in the development of the basis for the management plan of the new site.

The activities carried out during the project included several meetings with indigenous leaders to initially inform them of the proposed designation and the consultation processes and then to train them to formally carry out the consultation. It is important to highlight that the socialization of the Ramsar site proposal was done by indigenous leaders. The information materials such as posters were provided by the national and regional authorities as well as by WWF. The leaders then provided the information to their communities focusing on the objective of the area, the boundary of the area, the allowed uses of the area, the definition of a Ramsar site and agreements for its use and management. A final meeting took place where indigenous leaders presented the results of the socialization process and the decisions made by the communities.

Key Outcomes

The main key outcome is the successful completion of the consultation process and approval by indigenous communities for the designation of the site. This also resulted in raised awareness among the communities regarding the implications of designating the site and created more ownership of the process. After the consultation process, the Ramsar Information Sheet for the Estrella Fluvial Inírida site was finalized with support from environmental authorities, WWF and indigenous leaders. They also worked on the basic guidelines for the management plan and on the establishment of a Coordinating Committee for the plan.

Lessons Learned

For the designation of this site, the implementers highlighted the importance of the involvement of indigenous leaders in the whole process. Furthermore, the participation of national and regional authorities and their commitment to working with local communities to manage the site is key for the development of the management plan for the site.





Implementing Organization:
Instituto Ecoturístico y
Desarrollo de Montañas
(INECODEM)



WFF/12/PE/1

Conservation, ecotourism and sustainable development in the Lauricocha Wetland

The Lauricocha wetland is located in the Huanuco province of Peru and is home to the Lauricocha rural community. The project aimed to train and raise awareness among the community regarding the ecological and cultural values of the wetland, which could provide them with alternative and more sustainable livelihoods in order to improve their standard of living as most of them live in extreme poverty. The activities focused on awareness raising and training workshops on the conservation of the wetland, its importance, threats, and biodiversity, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and sustainable livelihoods, in particular ecotourism activities. Overall, four workshops with theory and practical components took place as well as a conference to present the results. Participants included local communities and authorities, and public and private sector representatives.

The project and its achievements were widely advertised through social media as well as through printed media such as banners and 1,000 posters that were distributed in key areas of the Huanuco region. In addition, two videos were made on the training workshops and one for promoting the Lauricocha wetlands as an ecotourism destination. Training materials were also produced for the workshops and the conference. The results of the project were also presented at a regional event in the framework of World Wetlands Day 2015 celebrations and at the International Conference on the Conservation of Wetlands in Latin America and the Caribbean in November 2014. The project was also presented to national and regional authorities.

Key Outcomes

More than 60 people attended each training workshop including members of the rural community, local authorities, teachers and youth groups. As part of the workshops, participants carried out cleaning brigades of the wetland and also identified potential trails in Lauricocha that could be promoted for tourism. One of the main outcomes of the conference was the establishment of the Lauricocha Wetlands Management Committee, which will include members from the local governments, communities and civil society.

Furthermore, the implementers identified the Tambococha wetlands as a similar area that could benefit from the results of the project and presented them at a workshop in the town of Gashampampa. Over 50 people participated in the workshop and there was a lot of interest in implementing the project in the Tambococha wetlands.

Lessons Learned

One of the main lessons learned from the implementation of this project was the need for clear and simple language to engage and build capacity among local communities in order to generate positive changes and contribute to the conservation and wise use of wetlands. Moreover, a need for better coordination among local stakeholders was identified as there are no management instruments at the regional level to strengthen the management of local wetlands.

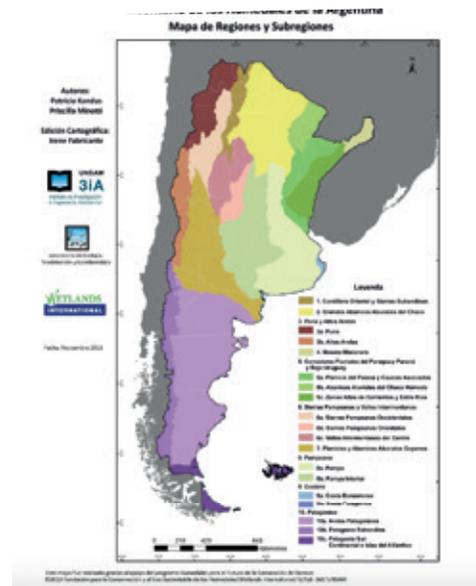


Documentation

Under this focus area, the Fund provides support to producing books, CDs, handbooks, leaflets, posters and other reference materials. Visitor and wetland centers have also been included here. Videos and radio broadcasts fall as much under this category as under “awareness raising”, while websites are treated under “networking”.



Implementing Organization:
Fundación Humedales/
Wetlands International
Argentina



The Inventory of Wetlands in Argentina: a tool for the implementation of the Ramsar Convention

Fundación Humedales Argentina developed this project as they had identified a gap in the knowledge related to wetlands in Argentina. There were a number of technical publications and research work groups but the lack of an inventory at the national scale remained. Furthermore, the need for a national wetlands inventory was identified in Argentina's 2008 National Report on the implementation of the Convention. The inventory was planned at three scale levels and this project covered the first level: Regions and subregions of wetlands at a scale of 1:1,000,000 to 1:500,000. The implementation of the project also contributes to regional objectives in the framework of the Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of La Plata River Basin.

The activities covered by the project included desk research to define regions and subregions as well workshops with a specialist working group to discuss findings and develop the first level of the inventory. Furthermore, a network of specialists from different regions of the country was established in order to carry out consultations and

integrate inputs into the inventory. The final section of the project focused on the dissemination of the results of the project as well as the digital version of the inventory.

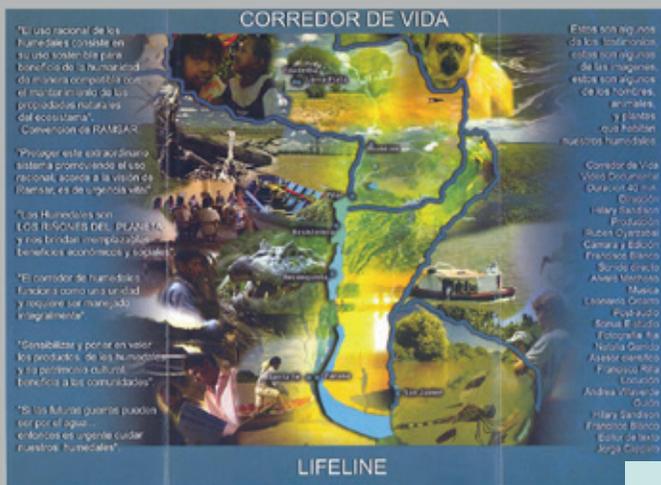
Key Outcomes

The achievements of the project include a new map of 10 wetland regions and 16 subregions in Argentina as well as the identification of new experts that could help with the other future stages of the inventory.

Lessons Learned

The success of the project highlights the importance of working together with relevant institutions, in this case, the Argentinian Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development (government entity in charge of the implementation of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands), the San Martín National University and Fundación Humedales/ Wetlands International Argentina.





Implementing Organization:
 ECOVIVIR Productora (Uruguay),
 NGO Alter Vida (Paraguay)
 and Fundación PROTEGER
 (Argentina)

Documentary “Corridor of Life”

The documentary “Corridor of Life” is a visual tool created by Studio ECOVIVIR (Uruguay) and partner organizations, the NGO Alter Vida (Paraguay) and the Foundation PROTEGER (Argentina), to raise awareness of some of the major wetlands in South America, placing emphasis on a corridor shared by Paraguay, Argentina and Uruguay. The project also aimed to promote management in wetland ecosystems through participatory policies and community integration. In addition, it promoted wetland conservation through the involvement of communities and government officials from Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay working in wetland conservation and management.

Key Outcomes

This documentary presents relevant aspects of wetlands in the three countries featuring experiences of conservation and wise use of wetlands. The work also highlights the social participatory process in the creation of new Ramsar sites and the River Coastline Wetland Corridor initiative. As part of the outreach strategy, the documentary was broadcast on television in several countries during the celebration of World Wetlands Day on 2 February 2004. It has also been shown in educational institutions.





Implementing Organization:
Ministerio de Vivienda,
Ordenamiento Territorial y
Medio Ambiente - Dirección
Nacional de Medio
Ambiente

National Wetlands Inventory of Uruguay

Uruguay has a strong legal framework that recognizes wetlands as key ecosystems. The Government of Uruguay executed this project through the Ministry of Housing, Land Use Planning and Environment, aiming to develop the National Wetlands Inventory. The purpose of the inventory is to identify priority wetlands for conservation as well as the value of the functions of each wetland and provide baseline information to measure future changes. The inventory would also be an important instrument for planning and managing national natural resources. As this is a major undertaking, the project was divided in phases and the Wetlands for the Future funding was used for the first phase.

The activities covered under this phase include the identification of all wetlands at a scale of 1:20,000. They were then characterized using satellite images and the information was validated in the field. In addition, methodologies for an integrated multiscale monitoring system for wetlands based on internationally applied procedures were also identified. From this work, priority areas to be designated as Ramsar sites were chosen and the Ramsar Information Sheets were prepared.

Furthermore, a communications strategy was developed to raise awareness and disseminate information on the benefits of wetlands and their designation as Ramsar sites. The strategy is supported by products such as

technical booklets and manuals as well as leaflets and posters for dissemination and awareness raising.

Key Outcomes

During this initial phase the team identified wetlands at the country scale and found that wetlands comprise 11.5% of the national territory. Other observations include the presence of 4 of the 12 coastal wetland types under the Ramsar classification system and 10 of the 20 continental wetland types.

Lessons Learned

This project allowed the implementers to recognize the extent of wetlands in Uruguay and provided baseline information for the establishment of policies, normative instruments and protection and restoration strategies for wetlands in the whole national territory.



Wetland Management and Tools

The projects under this focus area involve infrastructure and equipment, baseline and monitoring data about the characteristics of a site, guidance documents (e.g., management plans, policies and consensus documents), maps, software and databases. This includes preparation of management plans and restoration strategies for Ramsar Sites and other wetlands.



WFF/05/BO/1



Recovery of the Palmar de las Islas wetland

Implementing Organization:
Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) Bolivia, Fundación Kaa-lya, Parque Nacional Kaa-lya del Gran Chaco, Capitanía de Alto y Bajo Ioso, Museo de Historia Natural Noel Kempff Mercado

This project took place in one of the most important wetlands in Bolivia, the Palmar de las Islas Ramsar site which is under constant threat from livestock activities that have resulted in loss of biodiversity and pollution. The project involved a comprehensive technical study for the recovery of the site, which was made possible due to the collaboration from a number of institutions such as the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) Bolivia, the Kaa-lya Foundation, the Kaa-lya del Gran Chaco National Park, the Capitanía de Alto y Bajo Ioso and the Museum of Natural History Noel Kempff Mercado. The project had both a research component and an awareness raising component.

Under the research component, baseline information was collected in order to be able to monitor the state of the site over time, thus allowing the observation of natural regeneration and possible recovery of the wetlands. Areas of research for the baseline information included biodiversity, ecology of species and the wetland as a whole. Further research was conducted on invertebrates and vertebrates present at the site including the diversity of dragonflies (*Insecta, Odonata*), dung beetles (*Insecta, Scarabeidae, Scarabeinae*), butterflies (*Insecta, Lepidoptera*) and a diversity and abundance of medium and large mammals, birds, amphibians and reptiles, as well as the ecology of im-

portant species in the area, such as *Jabiru mycteria* (*Aves, Ciconiidae*), *Dolichotis salinicola* (*Rodentia, Caviidae*) and *Geochelone carbonaria* (*Testudines, Testudinidae*). As for the vegetation, an emphasis was placed on the regeneration of forest and palm trees. Three young scientists, seven students, nine local assistants and three park rangers of the Kaa-lya protected area participated in this component of the project which provided them with professional experience and training.

The awareness raising component involved the development of an illustrated guide for the general public based on the results of the research component.

Key Outcomes

The research component provided improved knowledge about certain groups of species and an opportunity to gain the first data on other species. All the information gathered is now in a database on the biodiversity of the site. Furthermore, this baseline information will be the basis for the development of the management plan of the site as well as for the preparation of the second Management Plan for the Kaa-lya National Park and Integrated Management Area.





Implementing Organization:
Municipality of Santo Domingo



WFF/02/CHI/1

Diagnostic and participatory monitoring in the Yali wetland

This project was carried out by the Municipality of Santo Domingo in collaboration with local communities for the benefit of the Yali Ramsar site. The project involved the identification of threats to the integrity of the site which together with interviews, surveys and workshops provided a baseline for the site. Historical data on the first inhabitants of the site as well as land use was also collected. Furthermore, with support from academic institutions, the water quality was measured and the climate and hydrology was characterized. Through this partnership, the impact of major economic activities on the wetlands was also evaluated.

Key Outcomes

An informative document entitled "Humedales: valores, funciones y amenazas" [Wetlands: values, functions and threats] was produced, as well as a video on wetlands, particularly the Yali Wetland.

The latter has been very well received by local and national authorities and the community, and it has been broadcast repeatedly by the provincial television channel. The results of the project and the outreach materials contributed to the creation of the Advisory Committee of Yali, which was established on September 30th, 2003, to implement the wise use of this site. The committee is composed of major provincial and communal authorities and its members include representatives of neighborhood councils from different wetland communities. This committee holds monthly meetings to discuss the main actions to achieve economic development in harmony with the wetlands and to inform of any problems found and their possible solutions. It is noteworthy that the committee also includes members of the main industrial estates in the area.





WFF/01/CR/1

Preparation of the Manual of Procedures for the Management of Mangroves of Costa Rica



Implementing Organization:
Sistema Nacional de Áreas
de Conservación (SINAC)

Through this project, the Sistema Nacional de Áreas de Conservación (SINAC) aimed to prepare a handbook on the procedures for managing mangroves in the country and to train their technical and administrative staff on issues related to the conservation and management of these important ecosystems. The handbook “Manual de procedimientos para el manejo de los manglares de Costa Rica” [A Handbook of Procedures for the Mangrove Management of Costa Rica] includes technical aspects, a legal framework, and administrative matters related to mangrove management. The participatory process that led to the preparation of the handbook involved officials of the Ministry of Environment, researchers and technicians working with mangroves and involved in their management. Once the first version of the document had been completed, training workshops took place and the handbook was validated.

Key Outcomes

The handbook, which is a technical and administrative tool, will allow officials from the Ministry of Environment and Energy of Costa Rica to make decisions based on criteria established by the authorities responsible for mangrove management, thus preventing subjectivity and decisions that are different for similar cases.

Sixty people, including researchers, technicians and resource managers actively participated in the handbook validation process. The final product is informative and simple, and thus it is considered as a useful tool for mangrove managers in Costa Rica and a reference for other Spanish speaking countries.





Implementing Organization:
Fundación para la Gestión
Ambiental Participativa



WFF/08/CR/1

Conservation of wetlands, participation and poverty alleviation in Central America

The Fundación para la Gestión Ambiental Participativa (FUNGAP) executed this project with the aim of providing information based on local realities for communities, decision makers and environmental authorities in order to strengthen the implementation of the Convention and the Central America Wetlands Policy. The project emphasized the implementation of Resolution IX.14 on wetlands and poverty alleviation. Furthermore, this project is the product of regional collaboration and participation as it was done jointly with BirdLife and involved the participation of many regional stakeholders.

To achieve the overall project goal, a method for analyzing the relationship between conservation and human welfare was developed. The methodology was then applied to 17 case studies in Central America. Data was obtained and analyzed in order to identify the factors that determine the effectiveness of social participation in Central America and its interdependence with wetland conservation and poverty alleviation alternatives. Once the research and practical phases of the project were done, Ramsar Administrative Authorities, NGOs and local communities were trained on the design of projects on these issues. Over 20 people participated in the training workshop which also included experts from other regions.

The results of the project were published as implementers saw the need to present the results to the wider public and to promote the methodology which may also be

applied in other regions depending on the local circumstances.

Through the process of implementing the project, strengths, needs and priorities to improve the conservation and wise use of resources were identified. In addition, even though the call for case studies was widely done, most of the projects sent for consideration were in important remaining areas of mangroves.

Key Outcomes

Besides the successful training of key stakeholders, one of the main results of the project was the identification of mangroves as priority ecosystems for conservation in Central America. They are key for biodiversity and are closely associated with the livelihoods of local communities. Another important observation was the extent of artisanal fishing being practiced in the region.

Lessons Learned

Overall, the project highlighted the need for more initiatives that focus on training communities in wetland conservation and wise use as well as in poverty alleviation alternatives. Furthermore, efforts should focus on improving fishing practices that ensure the equitable distribution of this resource in order to change attitudes towards environmental conservation.





WFF/07/EC/1

Improvement of fishing practices in the estuaries of the Ramsar site Reserva Ecológica de Manglares Cayapas-Mataje, Ecuador



Implementing Organization:
Junta Parroquial de Ancón
de Sardinias

The Ancón de Sardinias community developed this project to promote the sustainable management of fishery resources in order for communities to have a permanent income while contributing to the conservation of the Ramsar site. This was done by providing training on sustainable fishing practices, establishing a surveillance mechanism and reaching an agreement on a fish ban.

The training initiative started with the identification of 33 current artisanal practices. This was followed by training on the negative impacts of some fishing techniques and hands on training on sustainable fishing practices. For the establishment of the surveillance mechanism and the seasonal fishing ban, two workshops were carried out. The participants in the workshop on the surveillance system included local fishermen and authorities. For the second workshop on the seasonal fishing ban, participants included members of 13 communities, leaders of local fishing unions, local authorities as well as national and municipal police and NGOs. During this workshop the participants established the areas where the ban would apply and that would be watched. The surveillance mechanism and the seasonal fishing ban were established via a resolution of the local government. A third workshop was carried

out with all the communities and authorities involved to present the resolution.

By the time the final report of the project was sent to the Ramsar Secretariat the results of the project could already be seen.

Key Outcomes

Through the project, 20 young fishermen from the Palma Real community were trained in sustainable fishing practices. In addition, the community came together to establish a mechanism of surveillance for unsustainable fishing as well as a seasonal fishing ban based on a community control system. After the resolution was issued, the use of unsustainable fishing practices decreased significantly and fishing ban areas were being respected.





Implementing Organization:
Ministry of Physical
Planning, Land and Forest
Management



WFF/13/SR/1

Aerial survey training for research staff of the Ministry of Physical Planning, Land and Forest Management (RGB) to undertake baseline surveys, analysis and reporting of wetland flora and fauna

The Ministry of Physical Planning, Land and Forest Management of Suriname developed this project to improve the research capacity of their staff in terms of undertaking baseline surveys and analyzing and reporting information on wetland flora and fauna. The Ministry had previously identified a need for this kind of training as the skill level of their staff was very low and there were few opportunities for capacity building. The project was targeted specifically to field research activities in the Coppenamemonding Ramsar Site. The skills learned would then be applied more broadly to research activities across Suriname.

A competency based training package for the Ministry's staff was developed. It has theoretical and practical components of planning and undertaking aerial surveys to collect data on avian species. The training package was then used to train five members of staff who also undertook an aerial survey of the Ramsar site to collect data on bird species and put into practice the theory component of the training course. The five staff members were then trained on data analysis. They used the data collected on the aerial survey, analysed it and entered it into the Ministry's geodatabase. At the end of the training course, the five Ministry staff were fully qualified to train others to assist in future research activities.

The training course was developed and implemented by two international consultants who speak the local language, Dutch, and are experts in the field. Overall the course included two theoretical training sessions, two field trips and two aerial surveys.

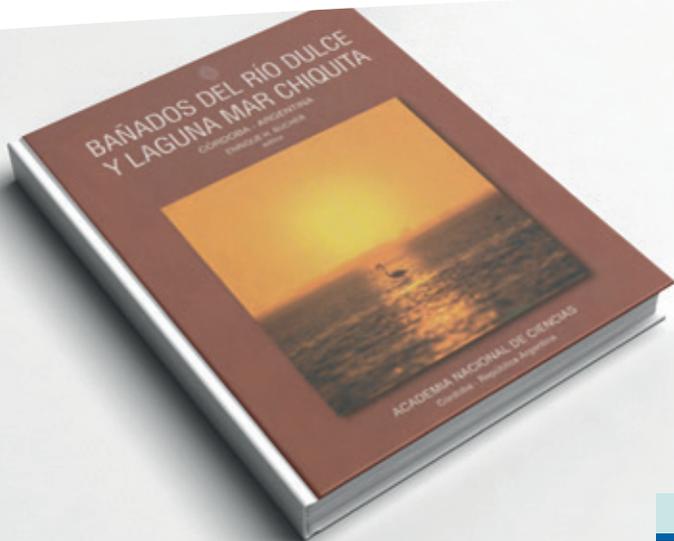
Key Outcomes

This project resulted in five staff from the Ministry being trained in field research activities and data analysis and able to train other staff, increasing the capacity of the Ministry. The data collected during the project contributed to an up to date data set of colonial and migratory birds in the Ramsar site as well as current data on the status of the site.



Academic and Research

The projects under this section include projects on data collection and/or processing and analysis of data into useable information or information products that are then made readily available to the entity that provided the data and through specialized journals and theses. Forum presentations in national and international events and new curricula (i.e. introduction of wetlands subjects into academic programs) are also considered.



WFF/00/ARG/1



Publication of a book on Mar Chiquita and associated wetlands

Implementing Organization:
Academia Nacional de Ciencias de Argentina

Through the implementation of this project, the Argentina National Academy of Science prepared university level teaching materials on the management and conservation of wetland ecosystems and produced a book on the ecology, conservation and sustainable management of Lake Mar Chiquita, a Ramsar site. The book, titled “Baños del Río Dulce y Laguna Mar Chiquita”, is a compilation of current knowledge about this Ramsar site and the result of the collaboration of 34 authors who synthesized the existing knowledge on this ecosystem, providing a detailed evaluation of the environmental risk in the region, with particular reference to current projects for water extraction from the rivers feeding Mar Chiquita.

The publication presents a wide range of information, including issues related to the conservation and sustainable use of the wetland, as well as historical information, physical and biological descriptions and human interactions with the site (past and present). The book was launched in April 2007 at the headquarters of the National Academy of Science located in Miramar, the largest city within the Ramsar site. It was then distributed in schools, museums, libraries and other public institutions in Mar Chiquita.

Key Outcomes

Besides the publication of the book, one of the main outcomes of the project is that the book has become a guide and source of regional information. In addition, it may be used in undergraduate and postgraduate courses aimed at the conservation and sustainable management of Laguna Mar Chiquita and neighboring wetlands. Another very important aspect of the publication is the contribution it provides to the management plan of the Ramsar site, because of its comprehensive database covering all aspects recommended by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands for the development of management plans.

Lessons Learned

One of the main lessons learned is that Ramsar sites need informative technical books that are accessible to the general public. They can be an important source of comprehensive information for decision-makers, politicians, conservation organizations, teachers and students and the general public. These publications should also include an analysis of the problems and needs for action in priority order. The project also highlighted the need for the incorporation of the importance of Ramsar sites into formal education systems, particularly in local populations within sites.





Strengthening the Environmental - Cultural Education Program in the Ecoregion Lachúa Ramsar Site

This project, led by Organización para la Conservación de la Naturaleza y Desarrollo Comunitario (ORCONDECO) and Parque Nacional Laguna Lachúa (PNLL) contributed to the larger project “Environmental and cultural education program for schools (PEACE) in the Ecoregión Lachúa”. The PEACE program began in 2009 with the aim of training and actively involving the Ramsar site’s rangers as environmental educators. The project also aimed to train and raise awareness among communities around the site with the goal of increasing scientific knowledge and recovering traditional Maya-Q’eqchi environmental knowledge. Before this program, long term environmental education initiatives focusing on local situations and involving local communities were few and had limited success.

Through this WFF project, topics on the values and wise use of wetlands were incorporated into the program. Training materials were developed and used in workshops for the communities around the Ramsar site. The project was successful above expectations thanks to the inclusion of social, environmental, economic and cultural aspects from a local perspective that took into consideration community values. This allowed students and educators to feel closer to the project and apply all the lessons learned.

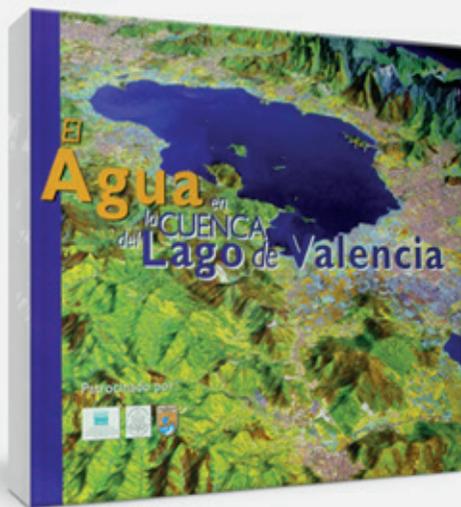
Key Outcomes

The results include three indigenous Maya-Q’eqchi youth leaders trained as environmental educators on the ecological and cultural importance of water and wetlands as well as 280 workshops on the same topics carried out in Spanish and Maya-Q’eqchi in 56 primary and middle schools in the area of the Ramsar Site. Furthermore, bilingual educational and awareness raising materials included information from 27 interviews with Maya-Q’eqchi elders who explained traditional knowledge and practices for the wise use of water in their communities. Ten bilingual radio spots were also produced and played in local radio stations.

Lessons Learned

The support and involvement of the national park, political leaders, schools, teachers, elders and the communities in general also played a significant role in the successful implementation of the project. In the future the organizers hope that they can strengthen the program and bring it to the rest of the local population in the 53 communities that live in the catchment area of the Ramsar Site. They expect that this will result in more actions to conserve the wetlands and use them wisely as well as more awareness about the values and services they provide.





WFF/03/VE/2



Implementing Organization:
Fundación Tierra Viva

Publication and distribution of the Water Atlas of the Lake Valencia Basin and Water Monitoring Handbook

Since its inception in 1991, the Tierra Viva Foundation has focused many of its efforts on producing educational materials in response to the needs of teachers and students, and to the local environmental situation. This project is a clear example of these efforts, involving specialists, teachers, national and international institutions as well as the general community.

The project aimed to prepare and print the Water Atlas and Monitoring handbook which were then validated by experts and distributed among schools, public libraries and community and municipal centers. The materials were then tested by carrying out monitoring activities with pilot institutions.

As part of the project, a forum was held on the situation of water resources and wetlands in the Lake Valencia Basin, and two visits were held at schools and institutions that had received the educational materials in order to evaluate their effectiveness. The project was successful and exceeded expectations as more copies of the materials were printed and a second forum was organized to involve key actors of the Lake Valencia Basin in the project and increase the coverage, dissemination and distribution of materials.

Key Outcomes

Overall, the project produced support materials for teachers and schools located in the basin, contributing to improving the understanding of the sustainable use, protection and management of water and wetlands in the Lake Valencia Basin in the central region of Venezuela.

Lessons Learned

The experience with this project showed that for a successful production of educational materials, regardless of their complexity, it is essential to have a good team, conduct a needs assessment, and involve specialists and users of the material during its development. Similarly, other key factors for success include strategic alliances (networks of schools, libraries or companies) and the commitment and interest by public and private institutions to reflect on and publicize the different social-environmental situations and needs in the region as shown by the materials.



Networking

This section includes any initiative aimed at establishing or strengthening linkages between specialized or non-specialized groups. In addition to the usual multi-stakeholder meetings and congresses, tools such as e-newsletters, virtual fora and joint (regional) initiatives are also included.



Implementing Organization:
Conservation International
Colombia



WFF/1-2/CO/4

World Congress on Paramos

The Congress aimed to establish a platform for knowledge and experience exchange, identify needs and gaps, advance in the assessment of the environmental services, adaptability, vulnerability and threats to the integrity of these ecosystems, and describe institutional regulation and management frameworks. Other objectives included the development of strategies for the conservation and sustainable management of paramo ecosystems as well as the promotion of the implementation of specific monitoring systems with regard to climate change impacts.

Participants included national and international experts as well as representatives from the business sector, communities, and governmental and non-governmental organizations, both national and international. Five thematic symposia were conducted, which included lectures, oral presentations, panels and workshops.

All information collected and the Declaration and Plan of Action were presented in the Congress Report. Subsequently, in 2002, the Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies (IDEAM) published the book "Páramos y Ecosiste-

mas Alto Andinos de Colombia en Condición HotSpot y Global Climatic Tensor".

Key Outcomes

Congress activities resulted in:

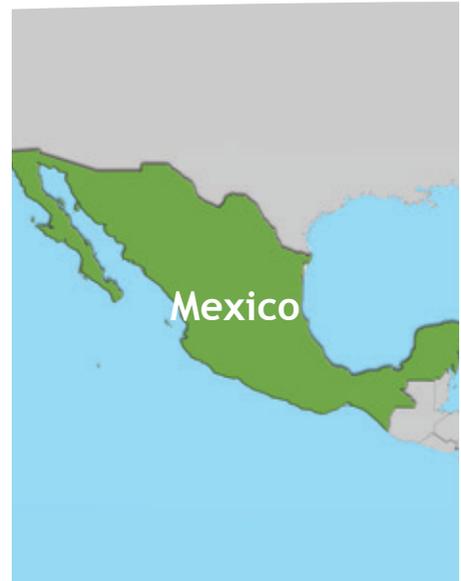
- A statement that established the importance of paramos as strategic ecosystems at international, national, regional and local levels.
- A diagnosis of the current situation in paramo ecosystems.
- A Proposed Plan of Action to be implemented with a regional approach by the Grupo Paramo Internacional and Working Groups on Paramos in each country at an early stage.
- An Environmental Accounting Strategy for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of paramo ecosystems.
- Lines of Action for the Future, which will include the profiles of specific projects to be developed under the strategy identified by the Working Groups.





WFF/09/MX/2

Congress on the conservation and research of shorebirds in Northeastern Mexico



Implementing Organization:
Centro de Ciencias de
Sinaloa

Northeastern Mexico is the most important region of the country for wintering migratory birds. Through this WFF project the Sinaloa Science Centre organized a week long congress on the conservation and research of shorebirds in Mexico. They also carried out a workshop to discuss and approve the plan for the project for the recovery of shorebirds in Northeastern Mexico. In addition, the congress provided a platform for knowledge exchange on current conservation and research activities and promoted the establishment of an Expert Group for the conservation of shorebirds and their wetlands. Species that need to be included in the current Mexican protected species lists were also identified. The project had remaining funds which were used to fund work to include new sites in WHSRN (Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network) as well as to raise awareness about the project.

Key Outcomes

Overall, 37 people participated in the congress including researchers, conservation workers and government officials. The congress took place in Tijuana, Baja California on the 13th and 14th of December 2010. Furthermore, as a result of the planning workshop funded through this WFF

project, the project for the recovery of shorebirds in Northeastern Mexico was finalized, approved and published. It is now the main strategy for the conservation of shorebirds in this part of the country. Other achievements of the project include the establishment of the Northeast Birds Group of Mexico whose members include representatives from civil society organizations, academic and research institutions as well as government agencies and the inclusion of four species of birds in the Federal Government list of protected species.

Lessons Learned

Through the implementation of the project it was evident that all the stakeholders working on the conservation of wetlands and shorebirds in this area of Mexico need to coordinate their work and promote it as there are significant achievements in the area but there is no strategy to do so.



Protection and Conservation of Priority Species

This section includes any initiative that aims to protect and conserve vulnerable/endangered/protected aquatic species such as: habitat protection, protection of nests and reproductive females, development of institutional capacity for conservation of species, development of measures to address threats, amongst others.



Implementing Organization:
 Instituto Recifes Costeiros
 and Federal University of
 Pernambuco



WFF/08/BR/1

A Brazilian training program for local guides on coral reef conservation and monitoring

Brazilian coral reefs represent the only reefs in the south Atlantic and support a large number of endemic species. In a country where over 18 million people live in coastal areas it is easy to see how urban centers, fishing and tourism have significant impacts on these fragile ecosystems. To address these threats, the Brazilian Ministry of Environment has been implementing an initiative to monitor coral reefs based on the Reef Check global protocol with the involvement of local communities and experts. The initiative started in 2002 but its continuity remained a challenge. Through this Wetlands for the Future project the implementers aimed to train local guides in order to offer good quality, competitive, sustainable tourism options while promoting coral reef conservation and monitoring.

Through the activities done as part of the project, local managers and communities were involved in the monitoring process increasing their engagement in the conservation of coral reefs. Training workshops took place in three key coral reef areas of Brazil: Costa dos Corais Environmental Protected Area, Abrolhos Marine National Park and Fernando de Noronha Marine National Park. The topics covered included basic coral reef ecology, identification of marine species, local and global threats and reef check and coral watch based on national monitoring protocols.

Key Outcomes

Overall, 48 people were trained through the workshops. Participants included protected area staff, managers, local divers, underwater tourism guides and representatives from local NGOs. The training courses were followed by monitoring expeditions with some of the participants. A strategy to implement the Reef Check EcoAction Program was also discussed with diving instructors at Abrolhos Marine National Park and Fernando de Noronha Marine National Park in order to look for monitoring sustainability.

In addition, monitoring and educational materials were also developed and published. These materials include information folders, identification guides, manuals featuring coral reef organisms, underwater slates, and underwater monitoring equipment. The information folders were developed in partnership with the Ministry of Environment to highlight Brazilian coral reef initiatives and were widely distributed at international meetings such as the International Coral Reef Initiative meetings and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission/UNESCO Ocean Conference





WFF/03/CO/1



Implementing Organization:
Fundación Omacha

Workshop on the evaluation of the status of manatee populations *Trichechus manatus* and *Trichechus inunguis* in Colombia

Manatees are an important and charismatic species found in many Colombian wetlands. They are under constant threat and there is an increasing need to protect them. Through this project, Fundación Omacha aimed to integrate information on the distribution and conservation issues of manatees (*T. manatus* and *T. inunguis*) into national wetland systems in order to propose strategies for the management and conservation of these species at the national, regional and local levels. This was achieved through a workshop where important information on these two species of manatees was collected and strategies were developed to manage and conserve them. The results were then published and made widely available.

The workshop took place in Cartagena, Colombia, in May 2004. Over 50 people from a number of regional and national government agencies, NGOs, communities and research institutes participated in the workshop. The sessions were divided into three sections: the first one allowed for knowledge exchange on work being done with these species and on policies and environmental legislation applicable to manatees. The second one involved regional working groups to collect information on the

distribution and threats to these species. The third and final section, also in regional working groups, was used to prioritize guidelines and projects for the conservation and management of manatees. With the information on the regional distribution of both species, base maps were produced using GIS software.

Key Outcomes

Based on the information collected during the workshop the “National Program for the Management and Conservation of Manatees in Colombia” (Programa Nacional de Manejo y Conservación de Manatíes en Colombia) was produced and published. It compiles all the results from the workshop including the maps and has sections on general information, the current status of the species per region, threats and an action plan for their conservation. 1,000 copies were printed and distributed among national, regional and local institutions.





Implementing Organization:
Fundación Keto



Training biologists and volunteers on the Reef Check protocol for long term monitoring in the Isla del Caño Biological Reserve and its surroundings

The Isla del Caño Biological Reserve is home to the most developed coral formations in the continental Pacific coast of Costa Rica. While the reserve is recognized for its importance as the main tourism attraction in the area, providing livelihoods for local communities, there is limited scientific knowledge about the species present in the area. Through this project, the Keto Foundation aimed to train biologists and volunteers in the implementation of the Reef Check protocol, adapting it to the Eastern Tropical Pacific in order to create a monitoring program that provides baseline information on the coral reef.

Key Outcomes

The activities that took place included a Reef Check certification workshop for 5 biologists from the Keto foundation, a meeting with experts to adapt the protocol and choose relevant species for monitoring, a Reef Check training workshop for five volunteers, dives to collect data and apply the adapted protocol, a workshop and establishment of Red Coral (a monitoring network in the country) and Caño Ecoteam (the monitoring team from the Reserve), and bimonthly monitoring of reefs. Local businesses were also engaged in workshops in order

to obtain their support for the monitoring process. The volunteers that participated in the project come from local communities and participated in most of the monitoring sessions. It is hoped they too will be certified in the Reef Check Protocol.

Lessons Learned

The implementers highlight that even though training people from local communities requires a lot of effort, it is something that should be done as much as possible as they are familiar with the area and know current and potential threats. By collaborating with local communities in areas of interest the monitoring processes are more likely to continue in the long term.



Conclusions

During the last 20 years, the Wetlands for the Future Fund has provided invaluable support for the conservation and wise use of wetlands in Latin America, the Caribbean and Mexico. Through this support, the Fund has contributed to the implementation of the Convention on the ground by increasing the capacity of Contracting Parties at national and local levels while promoting the concept of wise use. It has also been an important tool for the implementation of Ramsar's Convention Strategic Plans, contributing as well to national efforts for achieving the Aichi Targets, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and the Strategic Plan for Migratory Species. Therefore, the role of the Fund in strengthening international cooperation has to also be acknowledged as one of its major contributions to the implementation of the Convention in the region.

The review of the projects has emphasized that the most successful projects are those with concrete targets and participatory approaches that involve all stakeholders. It is because of these approaches and the commitment of Contracting Parties in the region, local and national institutions, NGOs and academia that the Fund has had such success in contributing to addressing the issues faced by wetlands today.

Latin American, Caribbean and Mexican wetlands face growing threats and challenges to their management, conservation and wise use. The Fund is a clear example of how initiatives such as this one can bring together different stakeholders and provide opportunities and tools required to build capacity, raise awareness and successfully manage wetlands. It is therefore imperative that collaborative actions such as those implemented through the Wetlands for the Future Fund continue to be promoted in the region.

The Wetlands for the Future Fund provides recipient countries with a great opportunity to continue using the Fund in order to support the implementation of the Convention in their territories as well as the new Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2024. It is only through their support and commitment that the regional impact achieved to date through the implementation of the Fund will continue and grow.



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