



CASE STUDY

WATERSHED-WIDE APPROACHES TO COMMUNITY-LED CONSERVATION SIERRA DE GUERRERO, MEXICO



BACKGROUND

CRESIG and EcoLogic joined forces in 2004 to promote sustainable development in Guerrero, one of the poorest states in Mexico. The Sierra de Guerrero mountain range has over 2.2 million acres of forest and is home to some 100,000 residents. Nine major rivers, including the Papagayo River, originate within this mountain range.

These rivers supply water directly to dozens of coastal cities in the State of Guerrero. The Papagayo River alone supplies 98% of Acapulco's water while a neighboring river provides 25% of Mexico City's water. Water quality and quantity have deteriorated from unsustainable land use upstream, including livestock grazing and herding, deforestation due to extraction of forestry products and migratory agriculture, and poor sanitation.

APPROACH

EcoLogic and CRESIG are creating a community-led integrated watershed management model with active participation of communities whose livelihoods depend on the Papagayo River. Together, we are furthering reforestation and sustainable land use in the upper water catchment area while establishing payments for ecosystem services. This entails establishing nominal fees for water use that are reinvested in watershed restoration and protection along with furthering sustainable community development.

We are working to ultimately establish water use payments by downstream private and government sector entities to assure financial incentives for conservation by upper watershed communities. Downstream water consumers in Acapulco can benefit from a cleaner, safer water supply which is vital to assuring confidence in Acapulco as a desirable tourism destination. The health of upstream rural communities will also benefit from improved



Key Accomplishments

- Creation of network of locally-declared protected areas, managed by local communities, covering 617,500 acres
- Designed a technical management plan for the network of locally-managed protected areas
- Conducted water analysis in Papagayo River tributaries
- Negotiated with ministries and private sector groups for political support, government funds, and private funds for payment for ecosystem services
- Worked with communities to organize and conduct annual forest maintenance and fire-prevention activities
- Began work in conjunction with Reforestamos Mexico to reforest the Papagayo River Watershed
- Initiated multisectoral support for Payment for Ecosystem Services of the Papagayo River

potable water services, while communities will be fairly compensated for managing the watershed.

EcoLogic is complementing this initiative by establishing voluntary payments for carbon offsets in response to global climate change, offering financial incentives to assure the stewardship of watersheds that include biodiverse habitat. About 18% of all greenhouse gas emissions are the result of deforestation, so offering local communities livelihood alternatives that discourage deforestation is an essential element of the overall effort to curb global climate change. The rapidly growing voluntary carbon credit markets offer tremendous potential benefit to conserve the Papagayo Watershed and help reduce the net amount of carbon in the atmosphere.



RESULTS

Between the start of project and 2006, EcoLogic and CRESIG held 15 community consultations involving more than 100 communities to identify local concerns and develop a management plan with direct community input



and review. To facilitate creation of this management plan, EcoLogic and CRESIG initiated a comprehensive baseline study and mapping of the Papagayo Watershed. Legal recognition was also gained for the 400,000-acre network of community protected areas incorporating 10 ejidos.

As part of its mission to establish sustainable livelihoods, EcoLogic worked with Camproduce, an alliance of socially responsible Mexican business leaders, to develop market opportunities for rural producers in “green” niche markets. Furthermore, EcoLogic facilitated a learning exchange to see a payment for ecosystem services model in action, taking Mexican stakeholders to see firsthand the efforts of EcoLogic’s partner in Honduras’s Pico Bonito National Park.

More recent initiatives:

- Establish community-led microwatershed management with emphasis on upper water catchment.
- Launch ecosystem service payments to compensate rural communities and promote conservation.
- Establish voluntary carbon offsets to benefit communities for planting and protecting forests.
- Expand income generation opportunities for sustainably produced mezcal and naturally sourced tree resin-based paint thinner.
- Initiation of multisectoral support for payment for ecosystem services of the Papagayo River

CONCLUSIONS

The advantage of the approach used here is that EcoLogic was able to strengthen water security and improve community health and nutrition, while at the same time ensuring biodiversity conservation.

However, community involvement is necessary for creating meaningful, long-lasting change, and a crucial part of the process was a plan for raising awareness of those populations involved in the project. A permanent lobbying process with local authorities was required in

order to build support for implementation of payment for environmental services that would be recognized by the population and encouraged by authorities.

It is also important to note that communities often need incentives to engage in effective conservation. The guarantee of a clean, safe water supply is one such incentive, while financial gain from payment for environmental services is another. However, such programs will only be effective if they complement other programs and services that strengthen sustainable land use.

PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Consejo Regional de la Sierra de Guerrero (CRESIG); EcoLogic Development Fund; Acapulco Hotel and Tourism Business Association (AHETA); Reforestamos Mexico/ Grupo Bimbo; CAMPRODUCE; COMEX; Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resources of the State of Guerrero (SEMAREN); and National Forest Commission, (CONAFOR); and the Federal Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT).

For More Information

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