
CONSERVA
COLOMBIA

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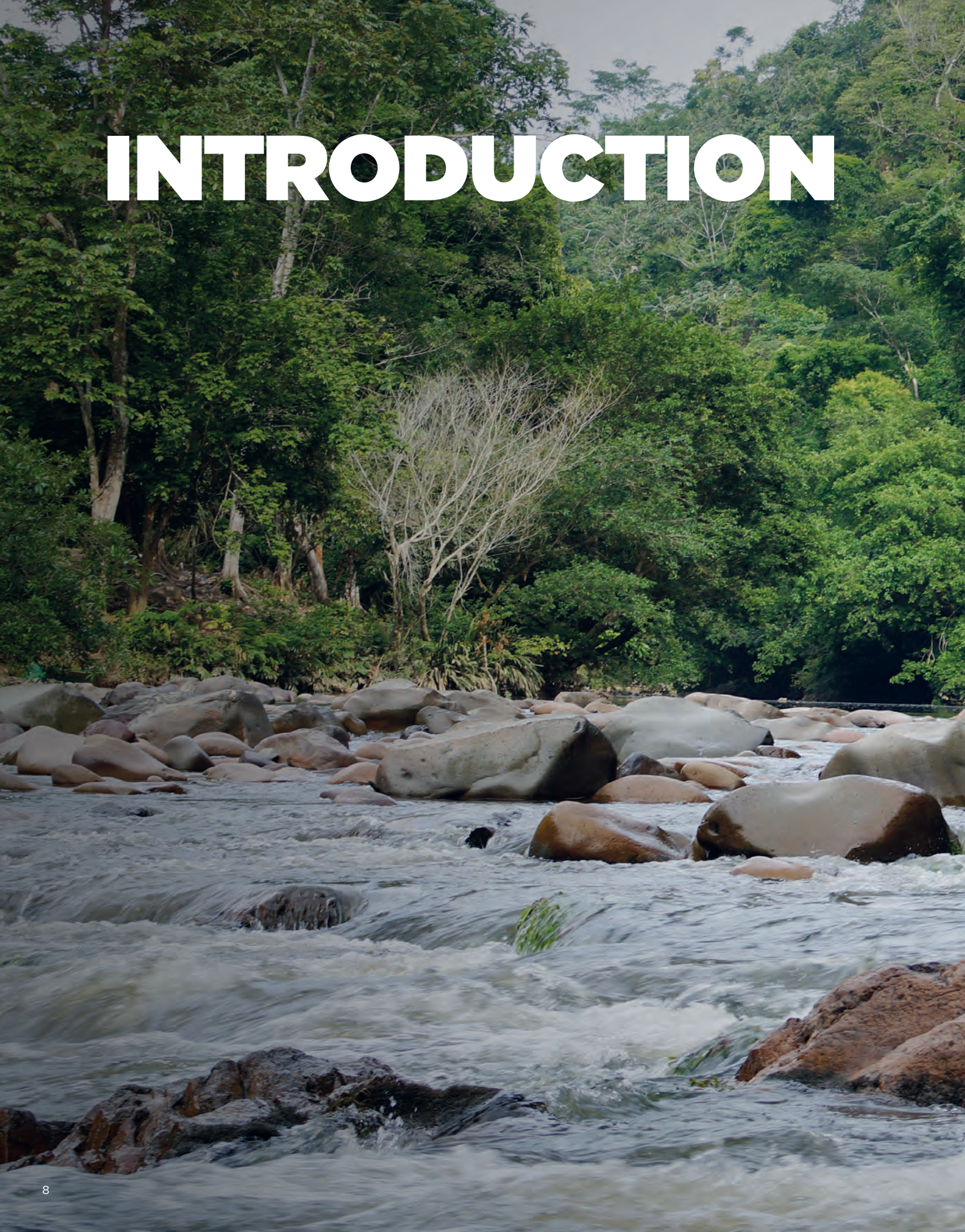
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INTRODUCTION





Conserva Colombia was a program designed by The Nature Conservancy in Colombia to promote and facilitate the creation of local protected areas in ecosystems that are under-represented in Colombia's national system of protected areas (Andrade & Corzo, 2011[1]): tropical dry forests, dry shrublands, tropical high plain and flooded savannas, and low-altitude hillside forests. It was implemented between 2009 and 2017 in partnership with and with co-funding from Fondo Acción. There is no doubt that Conserva Colomba was a unique and innovative program that achieved resounding results in relation to the conservation of the country's biodiversity.

Over the course of nine years, Conserva Colombia made it possible for 104 local protected areas, both public and private, to be designed in concert, 95 of which were created using the legal instruments in force at the time. The program also enabled three Municipal Systems of Protected Areas (SIMAP) to be strengthened or formally established, and brought about a significant increase in civil society's contribution to the conservation of the precious savannas of the Orinoco Basin. The local protected areas created with the support of Conserva Colombia totaled 200,000 hectares newly endowed with formal protection.

1 Andrade Pérez, G. I., & Corzo Mora, G. A. (2011). What should be conserved, and where? Bogotá, Colombia: Colombian National Park Service

Abbreviated project title	Amount: AP	Area (hectares)	Declaration status*	Funding source
Declaration of a conservation area in Galeras (Sucre)	1	1,577.7	Declared	TNC/AI
Strengthening of the SIMAP in the municipality of Toro (Valle del Cauca)	18	2,988.6	Declared	TNC/AI
Study for the declaration of a protected area (AP) in the Serranía del Perijá (La Guajira)	1	23,882.7	Declared	TNC/AI
Formulation of the environmental management plan (PMA) for a protected area along the Umpala River (Santander)	1	2,173.0	Declaration in process	TNC/AI
Establishment of a regional AP in Usiacurí (Atlántico)	1	837.0	Declared	TNC/AI
Declaration of the Cabrera River xerophytic enclave (Huila)	1	2,522.0	Declaration in process	TNC/AI
Declaration of an AP in the Bañaderos region (La Guajira)	1	10,820.0	Declared	USAID
Establishment of a regional AP in Piojó (Atlántico)	1	772.3	Declared	USAID
Declaration of a regional AP in the Chicamocha Canyon (Santander)	1	4,854.0	Declaration in process	PMC
Declaration of two forest reserves in San Juan Nepomuceno (Bolívar)	1	961.5	Declaration in process	PMC
Declaration of an AP in Bahía Portete, Bahía Honda, and Bahía Hondita (La Guajira*)			Cancelled	USAID
Local APs of dry forest in San Jacinto and San Juan Nepomuceno (Bolívar)	1	12,950.0	Declaration in process	USAID
Declaration of an AP in the Grande River Basin (Valle del Cauca)	1	6,418.0	Declared	USAID
Declaration of the Ranchería River Lower Basin (La Guajira)	1	32,799.3	Declared	CC
Declaration of the Ranchería River Delta (La Guajira)	1	3,601.5	Declared	CC
Registration of Natural Civil Society Reserves (RNSC) in Manizales and Villamaría (Caldas)			Cancelled	TNC/AI
Creation of a Local Protected Area (APL) in Dagua (Valle del Cauca)	1	911.7	Declared	TNC/AI
Creation of an APL in Restrepo and La Cumbre (Valle del Cauca)	1	4,310.1	Declared	TNC/AI
Registration of RNSC in Dagua (Valle del Cauca)	10	196.0	Declared	USAID
Creation of an APL in Toro, Roldanillo, and La Unión (Valle del Cauca)	1	10,840.0	Declared	USAID
Creation of an APL in Cali (Valle del Cauca)	1	142.9	Declared	TNC/AI
Consolidation of the SIMAP in Carolina del Príncipe (Antioquia)	20	7,932.0	Declared	USAID
Creation of an APL in El Peñol, Tambo, and Taminango (Nariño)	1	3,818.0	Declaration in process	TNC/AI
Declaration of a regional AP in Caucasia (Antioquia)	1	10,456.7	Declaration in process	FMSD
Consolidation of the SIMAP in Urrao (Antioquia)	17	85,199.4	Declared	FMSD
Registration of RNSC in Puerto Carreño (Vichada)	6	7,665.0	Declared	USAID
Registration of RNSC in El Cerrito (Valle del Cauca)	8	850.5	Declared	FMSD
Registration of RNSC in Orocué (Casanare)	4	1,025.0	Declared	USAID
Protected area in the swamps of the peasant farmer reserve zone in the valley of the Cimitarra River, the Serranía de San Lucas in Yondó (Antioquia), and Cantagallo (Bolívar)	1	31,148	Being studied	TNC/AI
Conservation by Funcopromas in the Serranía de San Lucas in Santa Rosa del Sur (Bolívar)	1	7,500	Being studied	TNC/AI
Total	**104**	**279,096.7**		
Declared total	**95**	**202,769.7**		

*Declaration status as of December 2018

WHY WAS CONSERVA COLOMBIA UNIQUE AND INNOVATIVE?

It was unique and innovative due to the way it operated through public tenders in which projects to create protected areas were selected through a competitive process, reaching a wide range of grassroots and non-governmental organizations and public authorities in three of the country's natural regions (Caribbean/Islands, Orinoquia, Andes).

It was unique due to the intervention model it put forward, through which the obstacles encountered by Colombia's environmental and regional authorities in declaring areas of environmental value were overcome by providing the funds required to finance the process and the technical resources to guide all aspects of designing the areas and their management plans, and by delivering close support to the implementers in order to familiarize them with the process.

It was unique due to the fact that it provided, in a single manual, all the technical tools necessary for the design and consensus-building process: scientific criteria for optimally designing the areas, the key components of a management plan (intended as a managerial tool), legal guidance regarding the conservation categories that exist in Colombia, and the key elements of a business plan that would make the areas financially sustainable.

It was unique due to its efficiency, managing to facilitate declaration processes in timeframes of between 12-18 months while responsibly managing financial contributions not exceeding US $50,000, leveraging public and private resources in a 1:1 ratio.

It was innovative because it brought civil society and the private sector together in a genuine public-private partnership in support of the state's fulfillment of its constitutional duty, before such schemes became widespread in the environmental sector.

It was innovative due to the way it used a partnership between civil society, international cooperation, and private enterprises to obtain support for a national goal – enhancing the effective conservation of biodiversity.

Conserva Colombia became a reality thanks to the funds provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Mario Santo Domingo Foundation (FMSD), Phillip Morris Colombia (PMC), Carbones del Cerrejón (CC), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and the Enterprise for the Americas Initiative account (AI), administrated by Fondo Acción. The municipalities and regional autonomous corporations contributed significant matched funding amounts (in cash and in kind), which enabled the goals of each project to be met.

None of these achievements, however, would have been possible without the efforts and commitment of the environmental authorities and civil organizations, which drove each step of the process and gave their backing to long-term conservation in their regions. This book is an account of and tribute to this invaluable work, which has ensured the survival of numerous plant and animal species of Colombia's biodiversity.

The book presents a number of emblematic and inspiring examples of protected areas that were established with the support of Conserva Colombia in all of its areas of intervention. It also includes examples of municipal systems of protected areas that have been led by municipal authorities. We hope that these examples will act as a source of inspiration to others, and encourage new efforts to improve the effective conservation of our most valuable asset: biodiversity.

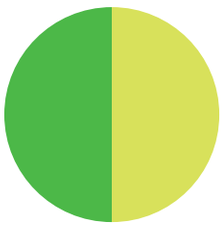
A DECADE OF PROTECTED AREAS **BASED ON LOCAL INITIATIVES**

Conserva Colombia has focused on promoting the creation of public and private protected areas in local settings that will allow for the protection of strategic ecosystems that are poorly represented in the National System of Protected Areas.

95
Protected areas declared

202,769
Hectares conserved

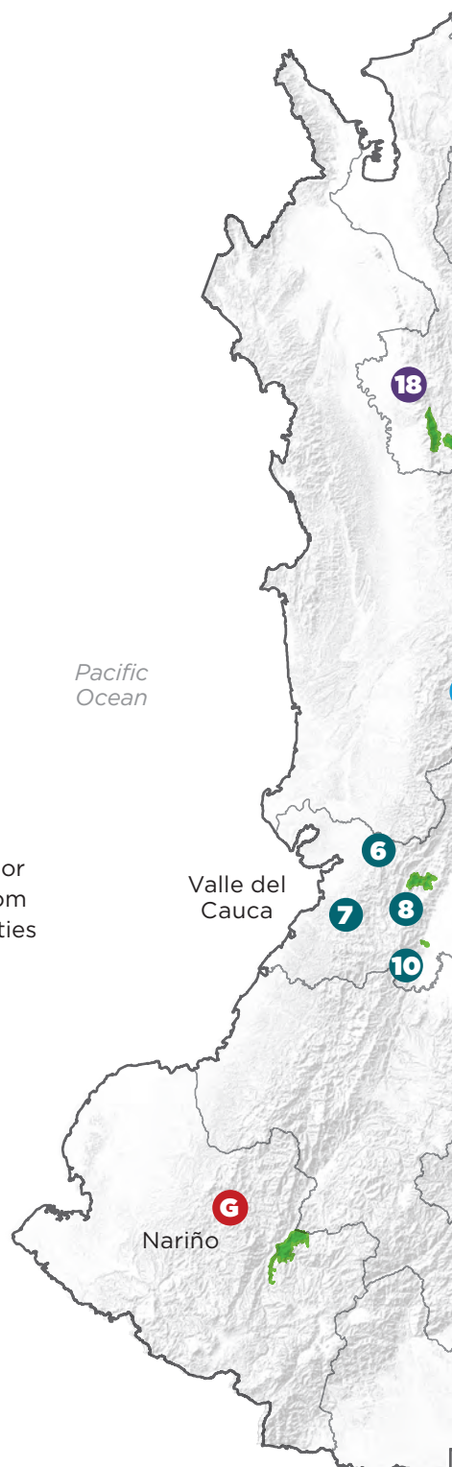
US $2,383,014



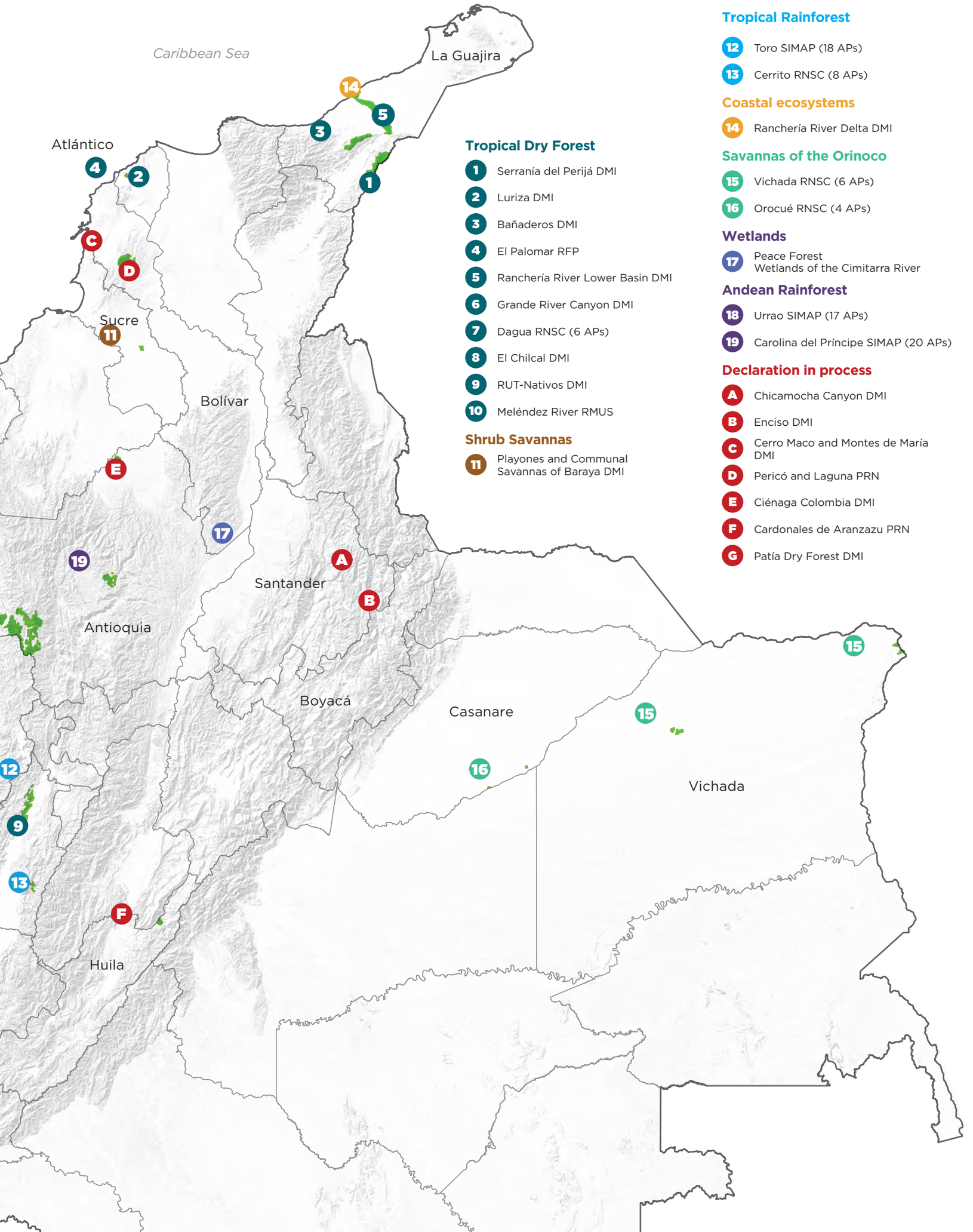
Investors

Conserva Colombia
- TNC
- Fondo Acción
- USAID
- Phillip Morris
- Carbones del Cerrejón
- Fundación Mario Santo Domingo

Matched Funds
Regional autonomous corporations, own funds, or financial contributions from NGOs and the municipalities



Acronyms
AP: Protected Area
DMI: Integrated Management District
RFP: Protective Forest Reserve
RNSC: Natural Civil Society Reserve
RMU: Municipal Sustainable Use Reserve
PRN: Regional Natural Park
SIMAP: Municipal System of Protected Areas



Tropical Dry Forest

1. Serranía del Perijá DMI
2. Luriza DMI
3. Bañaderos DMI
4. El Palomar RFP
5. Ranchería River Lower Basin DMI
6. Grande River Canyon DMI
7. Dagua RNSC (6 APs)
8. El Chilcal DMI
9. RUT-Nativos DMI
10. Meléndez River RMUS

Shrub Savannas

11. Playones and Communal Savannas of Baraya DMI

Tropical Rainforest

12. Toro SIMAP (18 APs)
13. Cerrito RNSC (8 APs)

Coastal ecosystems

14. Ranchería River Delta DMI

Savannas of the Orinoco

15. Vichada RNSC (6 APs)
16. Orocué RNSC (4 APs)

Wetlands

17. Peace Forest Wetlands of the Cimitarra River

Andean Rainforest

18. Urrao SIMAP (17 APs)
19. Carolina del Príncipe SIMAP (20 APs)

Declaration in process

- A. Chicamocha Canyon DMI
- B. Enciso DMI
- C. Cerro Maco and Montes de María DMI
- D. Pericó and Laguna PRN
- E. Ciénaga Colombia DMI
- F. Cardonales de Aranzazu PRN
- G. Patía Dry Forest DMI



INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

PLAYONES AND COMMUNAL SAVANNAS OF BARAYA

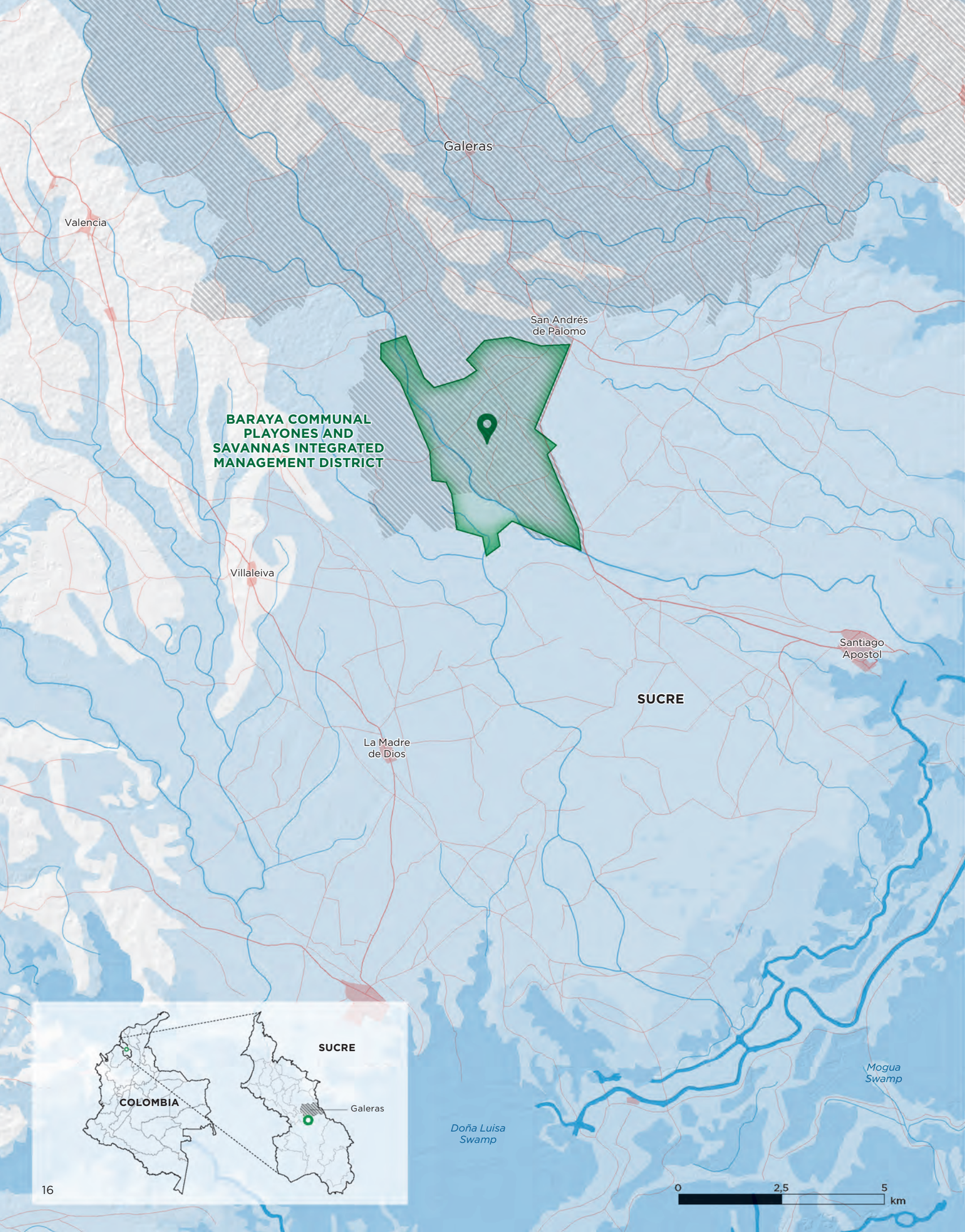
Area
1,578 ha.

Location
Galeras (Sucre)

Lead Organization
Municipality of Galeras



In a context such as that which occurs in the Caribbean region, efforts to conserve characteristic areas of key ecosystems make a significant contribution to establishing the local and regional systems of protected areas. This is the case in the municipality of Galeras, where the ecological uniqueness of its shrub savannas—in addition to specific characteristics related to land use and ownership—called for strategic actions aimed at expanding the existing knowledge of these ecosystems (which are unique in Colombia) and at preserving and restoring them on the other. In turn, the ancestral bond of this region with the Zenú culture endows it with significant cultural value.


Galeras
Valencia
San Andrés
de Palomo
BARAYA COMMUNAL
PLAYONES AND
SAVANNAS INTEGRATED
MANAGEMENT DISTRICT
Villaleiva
Santiago
Apostol
SUCRE
La Madre
de Dios
Mogua
Swamp
Doña Luisa
Swamp
SUCRE
COLOMBIA
Galeras
0
2,5
5
km

A MUNICIPALITY WITH AN INTEREST IN CONSERVING ITS NATIVE SAVANNAS, WHICH ARE ALSO A NATURAL RESOURCE OF COMMUNAL USE.

The people who make a living *sacando varita* (picking stems) on the Sucre savanna work long days, which begin before sunrise with them making a coffee and packing the food they carry with them while they search for and harvest wine palms (Attalea butyracea) on the natural savannas. They remove the stems from the palm leaves, and these are then skillfully woven into brooms by craftswomen to be sold in all the nearby towns. In Baraya, a township of Galeras in the department of Sucre, many people make a living making brooms, while others do so by leading what few cows they have to graze on the communal savannas, and by fishing in the area's stream and swamps and planting yucca, plantains, bananas, watermelons, and beans in the *playones,* seasonally formed spits of land, for family consumption.

The natural savannas of Baraya are a short distance from the Punta Blanca swamp, which forms part of the wetland complex of the San Jorge River. Both the open savannas of natural grassland and the *playones* that are formed during the dry season in the region's swamps and rivers have traditionally been used communally by local inhabitants, who have a tacit agreement to not seize or fence off these areas. However, the 21st century brought with it unscrupulous people, who took ownership of the savannas and *playones* and started to dry out the swamps. The community in Baraya is concerned by this situation, as it deprives them of the opportunity to access and make use of this public land, worsening its families' financial situation. The threats to biodiversity are non-native grasses, which compete with other plant species on the natural savanna, and the increased amount of cattle that trample and compact the soil.

The municipality of Galeras, conscious of their importance as natural wealth and due to their communal use, included Baraya's collectively-worked *playones* and natural savannas in their local system of protected areas, which was created in 2009. With the support of Conserva Colombia, in early 2010 the municipality headed a project to carry out studies of plants and animals, and to design the management plan for a future protected area. The community backed the project in hopes that, in that way, state entities including the Galeras Mayor's Office would lead the defense





of the communal savannas and regulate their use and management.

In late 2010, the environmental authority in the Sucre department—Carsucre—declared the *Playones* and Communal Savannas of Baraya Regional Integrated Management District (DRMI). Their conservation goals included protecting the open and shrub savannahs, restoring the forests along the banks of the streams, fostering the sustainable use of the savannas, *playones,* and the Punta Blanco swamp, and restoring the habitat of the Dahl's toad-headed turtle and the bocachico fish.

The project helped to form the Communal Land Defense Board, which are a legal requirement in savanna municipalities on the Caribbean coast. The board was made up of three representatives from the municipal authorities and two from the user communities, and its role is to identify conflicts and promote dialogue with people who try to take ownership of vacant land.

The importance of the Baraya DRMI lies in the fact that it is the first protected area on the natural savannas of the Caribbean coast to conserve native grassland, and the first protected area managed by Carsucre within the Caribbean Regional System of Protected Areas. Carsucre has been operating around the area; for example, it has several park rangers who make regular patrols, but the biggest challenge is to maintain continuity and keep up conservation efforts with reduced budgets.



Area

2,989 ha

Location
Toro, Valle del Cauca

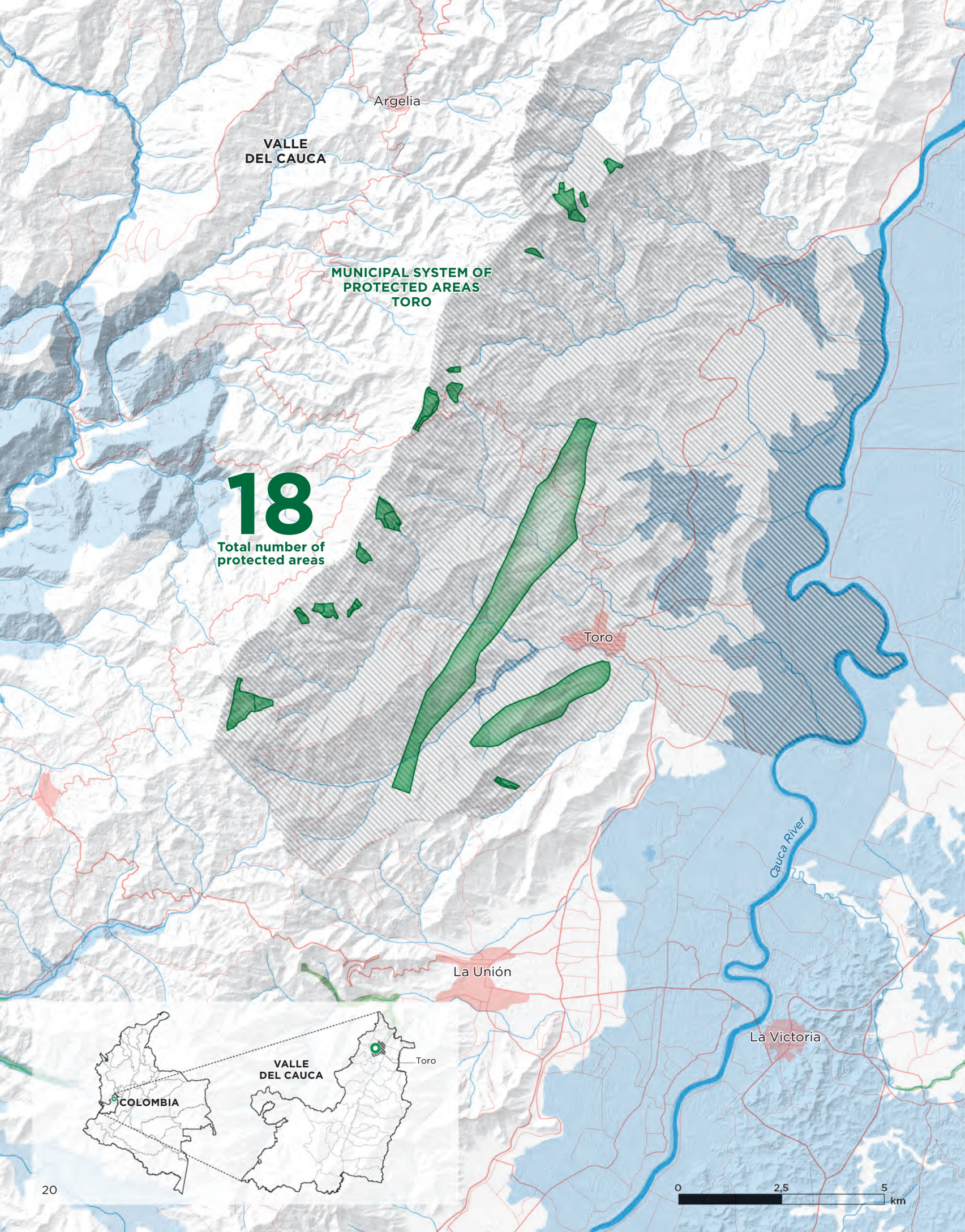
Lead Organization
Fundación Trópico

MUNICIPAL SYSTEM OF PROTECTED AREAS

TORO



The municipality of Toro, in the Valle del Cauca department, faces the challenge of developing a Municipal System of Protected Areas that will provide protection for its primary ecological structure while also underpinning the sustainable development of current and future generations. The municipality has a large swath of sub-Andean forest, wetlands, and dry and sub-xerophytic forests, all of which are of great interest for conservation in line with the local priorities of the Valle del Cauca Regional Autonomous Corporation (CVC). These ecosystems are vital in the provision of the environmental goods and services needed by the population, and they offer a habitat for endangered, endemic, and migratory species. The Toro Municipal System of Protected Areas was established with a view to taking better care of these environments, and it comprises a sustainable use reserve, a wildlife refuge, a natural park, and fifteen ecological reserves.


Argelia
VALLE
DEL CAUCA
MUNICIPAL SYSTEM OF
PROTECTED AREAS
TORO
18
Total number of
protected areas
Toro
Cauca River
La Unión
La Victoria
VALLE
DEL CAUCA
Toro
COLOMBIA
0
2,5
5
km

A MUNICIPAL SYSTEM OF PROTECTED AREAS: A MODEL AND EXAMPLE FOR COLOMBIA

During a severe drought in 1995, the inhabitants of the municipality of Toro were left without water. As a result of this environmental and social emergency, the municipal authorities set about the task of developing a water protection policy, purchasing 23 plots of land to protect water springs and establishing conservation incentives through tax reductions. The municipality began participating in the local roundtables of the Valle del Cauca Departmental System of Protected Areas (SIDAP), identifying its local conservation priorities and also recognizing its immense richness in terms of plants, animals, and highly endangered ecosystems such as the dry forest. With the aim of raising awareness across the population about the importance of biodiversity and its environmental services, the Toro Municipal Mayor's Office invited Fundación Trópico to form its Municipal System of Protected Areas (SIMAP). Following the approval of the Conserva Colombia project in 2009, the participatory, educational, and administrative process of supporting its consolidation and adoption got underway.

Through the SIMAP, the Mayor's Office and Municipal Council of Toro continued to be a benchmark for local authority commitment to the environment. The Mayor's Office, through public officials from UMATA (the Municipal Unit for Technical Agricultural Assistance), assumed direct and purposeful responsibility throughout the whole project. The public officials from UMATA were the heartbeat of the project, as they were well-known in all the villages and because they facilitated all the contacts and arrangements with companies, schools, and cooperatives.

From the outset, the project actively sought to involve people from the municipality's towns and rural areas on an equal basis. Fundación Trópico and the Mayor's Office started out from the premise that conservation is not only the responsibility of farmers on their land, but that there is a need for town residents to make a commitment by supporting initiatives and acknowledging farmers' role in conservation efforts. For this reason, the project placed great emphasis on activities related to environmental education and awareness-raising with both populations. Specifically, at a rural level, work also took place that tied in with rural processes such as conservation *mingas* (communal work days),



the recovery of knowledge, and the creation of ecological groups.

Seeking out the support of the private sector was also a priority, in order to use partnerships to significantly increase the resources obtained; not with money, but rather through logistical support for the activities and commitment to the process. Examples of this include the Valle del Cauca Departmental Coffee Growers' Committee, which agreed to help encourage environmentally sustainable production in the coffee-growing communities in the areas covered by the Toro SIMAP; the TransToro cooperative, which pledged to offer a 50% discount on transport for biologists or other professionals to carry out the necessary studies during the project; the Merk Toro supermarket, which donated drinks on the day of the walk for local biodiversity; the Colombian National Police, who formally agreed to make regular visits to already-declared plots of land; and local private schools, which donated the materials to decorate the floats on the day of the walk.

The municipal council adopted the SIMAP on May 10, 2010, and it was the second SIMAP in the Valle del Cauca department, including areas of municipal and regional conservation. One of the projects that emerged from the Toro SIMAP was the declaration as a protected area of a tract of dry forest spanning the municipalities of Toro, Roldanillo, and La Unión. The regional protected area RUT NATIVOS came into being in 2015, also as part of the Conserva Colombia initiative. The Toro SIMAP is visited by people involved in similar processes in their municipalities who are interested in learning from the experiences of the Toro project. The municipality carries out conservation actions within the system and is mobilizing resources to strengthen the conservation areas in which it already works. Its challenge is to maintain the initial momentum and retain official support for the management of the areas. Despite these obstacles, the Toro SIMAP continues to be a model for local authority leadership and management for conservation.



Area

23,883 ha

Location
Hato Nuevo, Barrancas, Fonseca, and San Juan del Cesar (La Guajira)

Lead Organization
Fundación Biocolombia (Foundation for the Conservation of Natural Heritage)

INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

SERRANÍA DEL PERIJÁ



The first Conserva Colombia project in La Guajira covers an area of immense regional, national, and bi-national (due to its proximity to the border with Venezuela) importance: the Serranía del Perijá. The four municipalities that form part of the protected area—Hatonuevo, Barrancas, Fonseca, and San Juan del Cesar—recognize the high strategic value of this integrated management district, due to the uniqueness of the biodiversity found there, its function as a conservation corridor, and its water resources, on which human consumption and the development of the productive activities of the population living in the area are dependent. This groundbreaking project established key guidelines for future conservation efforts and the creation of protected areas in the Colombian Caribbean, a region.

WITH A RECENT HISTORY OF ILLEGAL CROPS AND ARMED CONFLICT THAT IS HOME TO ORGANIZED COMMUNITIES LIVING WITH RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS, AND WHICH AIMS TO CONSERVE ITS BIODIVERSITY.

The names of the municipalities of Barrancas, Fonseca, Hatonuevo, and San Juan del Cesar immediately call to mind their Vallenato music and festivals. As well as their musical culture, these places also share the Serranía del Perijá mountain range. These mountains play an essential role in conservation, as most of the water that reaches the La Guajira and Cesar departments originates there and not in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta mountains as is commonly thought. This is a remarkable region; despite a past of illegal crops like marijuana and later coca, in addition to a long and violent armed conflict and the transformation of its forests, to this day it is still host to a wide range of biodiversity and many trees and water sources.

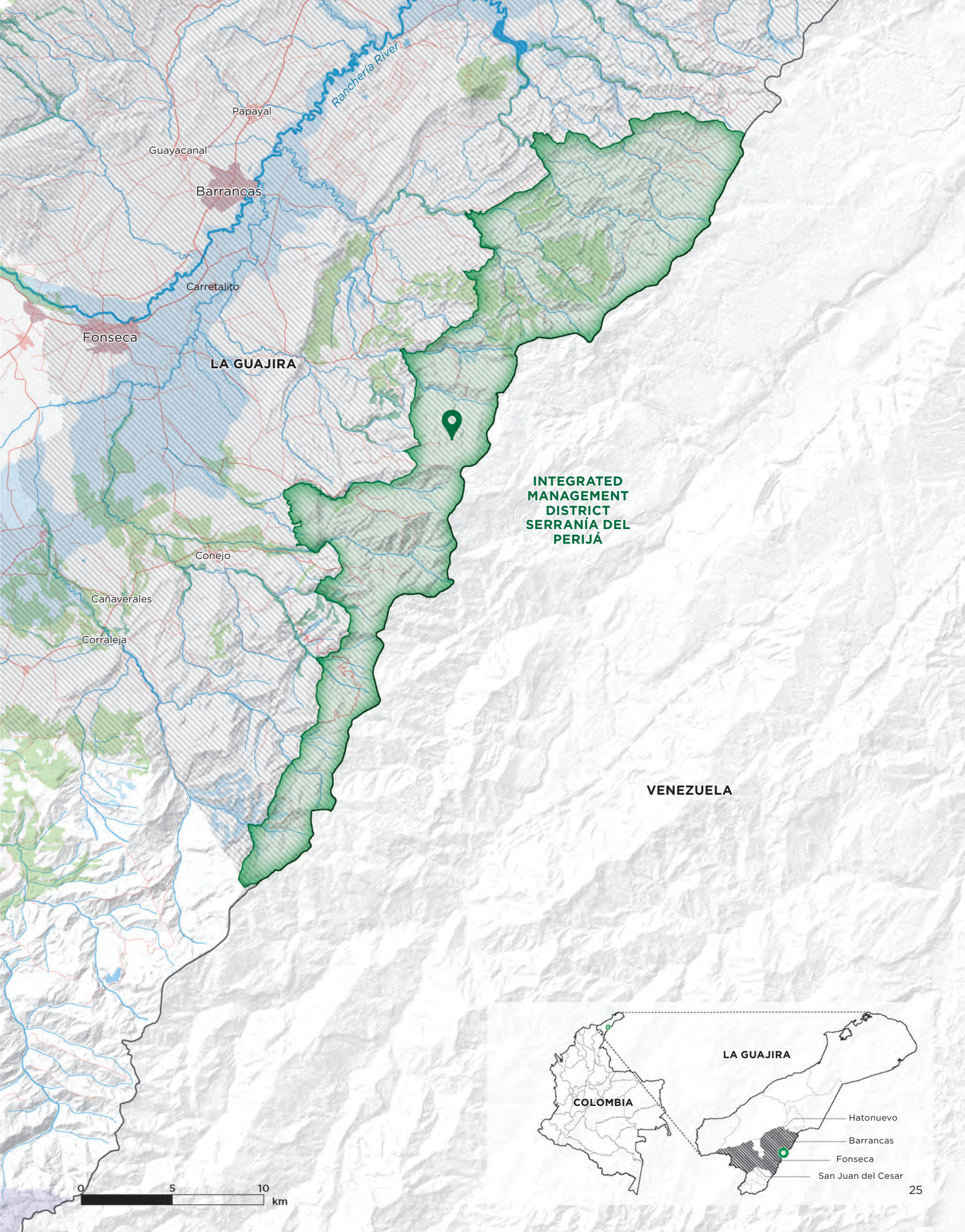
As the environmental authority in the region, Corpoguajira was always mindful of the importance of the Serranía, and had placed it on a waiting list for a regional protected area to be created there, which would ensure the conservation of its enormous environmental richness without changing its productive and self-supply functions. Consequently, when Fundación Biocolombia proposed forming a partnership to participate in the Conserva Colombia program, Corpoguajira did not hesitate to offer support and co-fund the scientific studies needed as an input for the future protected area and for the production of its management plan in tandem with the community. The project took place during 2010, and in 2011 Corpoguajira declared the Serranía del Perijá Integrated Management District, which was to be the first formal conservation effort in the Serranía.

The communities in the region practice subsistence agriculture, primarily by producing coffee and raising cattle. During periods of violence, many of the land owners and their families lived in the nearest population centers and returned to their farms periodically to check on their animals and the progress of their crops. When the project started, these dynamics began to shift, with local inhabitants sensing an improvement in the public order situation and some gradually going back to the Serranía to live on and work their land again. Working in a conflict zone was challenging for the project team, but the unfailing support of the community for the process made everything possible. The community gave advice about the most suitable time to hold workshops and schedule field trips. There were also high expectations among the biologists regarding the research results, due to it being the first study conducted of the area's flora and fauna.

One of the most satisfying aspects over the course of the project was the full involvement of local communities, who found it meaningful to be taken into account and for people to actually come and carry out a project, as this was unusual due to the multiple challenges in the area. There was generally a positive response: the community action boards and their leaders promoted the workshops among the landowners and residents in the Serranía which resulted in good attendance. By taking ownership of the issue, people changed their discourse and began to understand why conservation is needed in the Serranía. Other interest groups, including the Regional Association of Coffee Growers, expressed their support for the project. The constant involvement of Corpoguajira was a fundamental part of the declaration process. By comparison, the conservation interests of the municipal councils and administrations still require long-term work to help them understand that their municipality's development really can benefit from making a commitment to the conservation of environmental services such as water.

The challenge today is to make the protected area a reality in the region, through the implementation of its management plan, the restoration of ecosystems, the enclosure of water sources, improvements in the productive and post-harvest processes of coffee and livestock raising, and the creation of new sustainable and profitable projects. The protected area holds a great deal of potential as a result of the community organizations' togetherness, dynamism, and interest in conservation, together with the support of the Departmental Committee of Coffee Growers. There is a need for commitment from both the communities and the environmental authorities alike, the latter due to their environmental and administrative powers over the protected area.

The declaration of the Serranía del Perijá DMI left two lessons for other conservation projects in far-lying areas with the presence of severe armed conflict. The first is the advantage of a flexible approach to the differences between the proposed methodology laid out in a document and what a region really needs, according to its social and environmental reality. The second lesson is the importance of incorporating payments for environmental services such as water retention into the financial strategies of protected areas such as the Serranía del Perijá, where more popular alternatives like tourism are not a realistic option.


Ranchería River
Papayal
Guayacanal
Barrancas
Carretalito
Fonseca
LA GUAJIRA
INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT DISTRICT SERRANÍA DEL PERIJÁ
Conejo
Cañaverales
Corraleja
VENEZUELA
0
5
10
km
LA GUAJIRA
COLOMBIA
Hatonuevo
Barrancas
Fonseca
San Juan del Cesar



Area

837 ha

Location
Usiacurí (Atlántico)

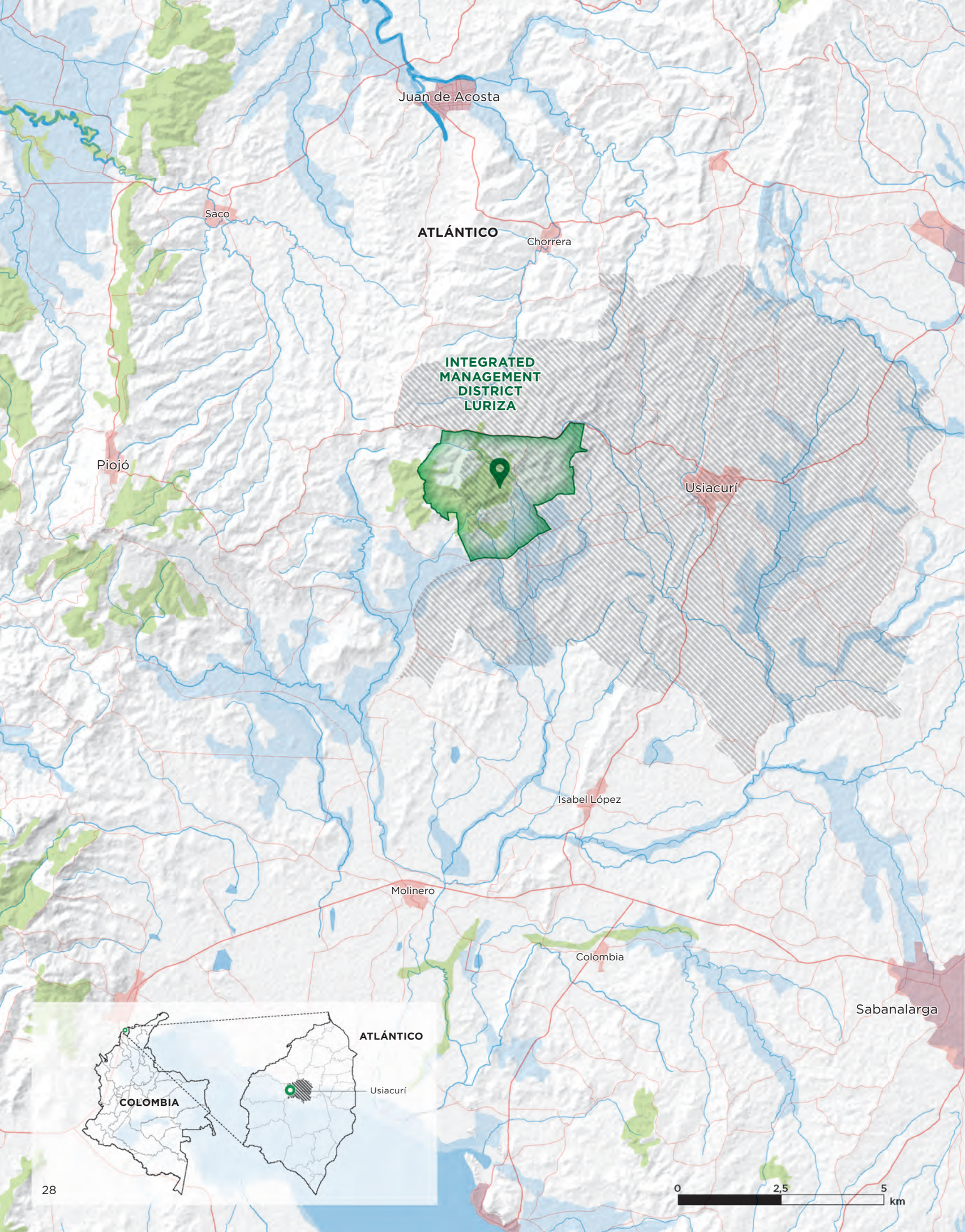
Lead Organization
Fundación Ecosistemas Secos de Colombia

INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

LURIZA



The watershed of the Luriza stream in the municipality of Usiacurí stands out as the first protected area to be declared in the Atlántico department, a precedent that paved the way for other conservation projects in the Caribbean region. The initiative arose in response to a worrying loss of tree coverage in the area and, in addition to a focus on the preservation of natural elements such as the dry forest and its associated species, it also upholds other intangible cultural values connected to the ancestral knowledge of the communities: the use of Iraca palm and medicinal plants and infusions.


Juan de Acosta
Saco
ATLÁNTICO
Chorrera
INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT DISTRICT LURIZA
Piojó
Usiacurí
Isabel López
Molinero
Colombia
Sabanalarga
ATLÁNTICO
COLOMBIA
Usiacurí
0
2,5
5
km

PROTECTING THE LURIZA STREAM AND ITS DRY FOREST: A COMMUNITY, MUNICIPAL, AND REGIONAL PRIORITY

Tourists visit Usiacurí, a 45-minute journey from Barranquilla, due to it being the most picturesque municipality in the Atlántico department and the fact it offers Iraca palm handicrafts of the highest quality, as well as walking trails through the Luriza forest. Usiacurí Verde is a local environmental organization with strong roots due to the beautiful scenery of the Luriza stream and forest. The organization started to promote the municipality as an ecotourism destination, training local guides through the National Learning Service (SENA) and taking children from local schools on walks along the stream to raise awareness of the importance of protecting it. The Luriza community and the Usiacurí Mayor's Office also had a long-held desire to conserve the forest as a formal protected area.

When the environmental authority in Atlántico, the CRA, identified 15 sites with the potential to be turned into protected areas in the department, Luriza was at the top of the list due to the fact that it was home to one of its last remaining healthy dry forests and had no protected areas at that time. The local community was already aware of the need to conserve the stream. In 2010, with the support of the Conserva Colombia program, Fundación Ecosistemas Secos de Colombia, the Usiacurí Mayor's Office, and the CRA worked together to declare Luriza as the first regional protected area in Atlántico. Fundación Ecosistemas Secos de Colombia got the project in Luriza underway and the members of Usiacurí Verde acted as a trusted partner, both for their knowledge of the uses and common names of many plant and animal species and for their close relationship with the community, which made it easier for them to bring community leaders, landowners, and the Luriza community together for workshops and meetings. The Mayor's Office gave its total support to the project.

"We want to keep making crafts and pass it on to our children," were the words of the Luriza community—many of whom work making Iraca palm handicrafts—during the workshops through which they hoped to reach an agreement regarding what could be done within the protected area, and how it could be achieved. Iraca palm crafts involve traditional knowledge that is still alive, and they do not want it to be lost. A large part of the Luriza community makes a living from handicrafts, and while nowadays it is hard to get young people





to take an interest in the craft, many women still weave and there is a women weavers' association. Previously, the Luriza forest supplied all the Iraca palm required, but over time, more materials were required and it became necessary to bring more from San Jacinto (Bolívar). Having access to the raw material is a priority for the craftswomen, and for that reason, one of the elements to be conserved in the protected area is the cultivation of Iraca palm and the possibility of transmitting this knowledge, rooted in traditional wisdom, to their children.

In March 2011, the CRA declared the Luriza forest as part of the Luriza DMI. The organization started to manage the protected area, and over the first two years, Usiacurí Verde worked with technical experts recruited by the CRA and the Mayor's Office to make the management plan a reality. The Mayor's Office, whose yearly plans always included the declaration of Luriza as a municipal protected area, welcomed the news of it being named a regional protected area. The challenge today is to keep up that same initial momentum and convince the mayors currently in office of the value that the Luriza DMI represents for their municipalities.

The main lesson that emerged from the project is that communities must always be involved in conservation processes. Including them from the outset is essential, as is listening to the knowledge they possess, because they understand their territory.



Area

10,820 ha

Location
Riohacha, Hatonuevo, Barrancas, and Distracción (La Guajira)

Lead Organization
Fundación Biocolombia (Foundation for the Conservation of Natural Heritage)

INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

BAÑADEROS
UPPER CAMARONES RIVER BASIN



The Serranía de Bañaderos mountains are located in the eastern flanks of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, an area of particular biological and hydrological importance that is part of the municipality of Riohacha. The need to protect the Serranía is based on the uniqueness of the biota it harbors, its ecosystem services that sustain human activities, and its strategic location as a biological corridor between the Serranía del Perijá and the Sierra Nevada, connected to the Los Flamencos Flora and Fauna Sanctuary. This regional conservation initiative was strengthened through the leadership of Fundación Biocolombia and the support of Corpoguajira.

A MOUNTAIN RANGE THAT PLAYS A KEY ROLE IN CONNECTING LANDSCAPES WITH FARMING COMMUNITIES WHO ARE ORGANIZED AND AWARE OF THEIR ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

The Serranía de Bañaderos contains areas of rainforest in which brown spider monkeys can still be seen today. The protection of the upper basin of the Camarones River is highly important, due to the fact that the prosperity of the coastal wetlands that make up the Los Flamencos Flora and Fauna Sanctuary is dependent on it. The dry forests and rainforests that form a biological corridor between the biodiversity of the Sierra Nevada and that of the Serranía del Perijá must also be protected. These are some of the reasons for which the departmental environmental authority, Corpoguajira, created the protected area called the Bañaderos and Upper Camarones Integrated Management District in 2013.

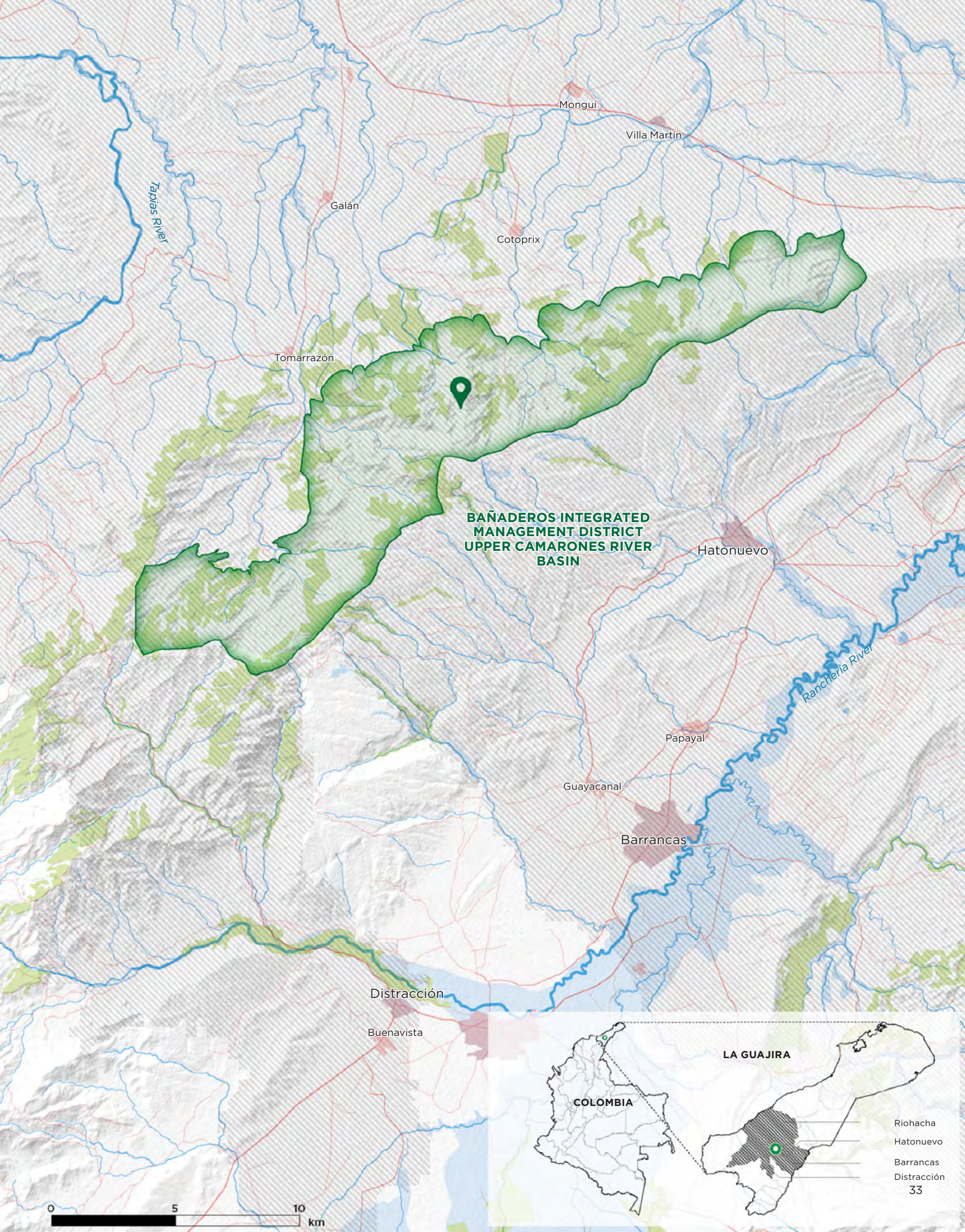
Upon commencement of the project in 2011 with studies into the plants and animals in the area, two surprises awaited the biologists from Fundación Biocolombia. The first was coming face to face unexpectedly with a unique landscape of natural savannas where they spotted several Andean condorson the outskirts of the municipalities of Fonseca and Distracción, while the second was coming across a group of brown spider monkeys in the forest. This endangered species of monkey is unique to Colombia and on the verge of extinction, and the merefact of finding them in the area merited the creation of a protected area.

It goes without saying that the Serranía is also inhabited by families who have worked the land there for generations, while others arrived with the *marimbera bonanza* and, more recently, due to the restitution of land to displaced communities from the Magdalena, Córdoba, and César departments. Farms of various sizes can frequently be seen dotted around the landscape, with cattle farming for beef, as well as corn, yucca, plantain, coffee, and avocado crops. Local communities show a great deal of mutual solidarity, which enables them to overcome their day-to-day problems and meet their basic needs in an area with little development and a weak state presence.

They also understand the environmental issues that affect their quality of life, such as reduced water flow in rivers and streams during the dry season, soil erosion, the use of pesticides for shrimp fishing, and water pollution. For this reason, they were active participants in the meetings and events held as part of the project to protect the area. The various community action boards are highly capable of managing funds allocated to activities that will benefit them and aid them in the search for a better life, as well as contributing to environmental conservation. They have experience working with the La Guajira Governor's Office and the municipalities, and they work to promote conservation projects and community development. There are even leaders who voluntarily preserve large wooded areas on their land.

As in many other areas that Conserva Colombia supports, educational institutions are extremely interested in the environment and actively encourage its protection, making them important allies for the protected area. In Bañaderos, the Tomarrazón Agricultural Institution and its director and renowned local environmental leader,Luis Vásquez Rivadeneira,were key to achieving formal protection for the area. Luis not only carries out work in classrooms, but also practical projects with students such as the construction of a nursery for the production of native tree species in order to reforest water springs and the banks of streams and creeks.

During the workshops to produce the management plan with the communities, local leaders stated on various occasions that there was a need for the collectively-made commitments and conservation projects in the area to continue to be driven forward and developed under the guidance of Corpoguajira. The current challenges are to maintain the initial momentum, strengthen the presence of the environmental authorities in the area, and keep improving their environmental and inter-institutional management capacity.


Monguí
Villa Martín
Tapias River
Galán
Cotoprix
Tomarrazón
BAÑADEROS INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT DISTRICT UPPER CAMARONES RIVER BASIN
Hatonuevo
Ranchería River
Papayal
Guayacanal
Barrancas
Distracción
Buenavista
LA GUAJIRA
COLOMBIA
Riohacha
Hatonuevo
Barrancas
Distracción
0
5
10
km



Area

772 ha

Location
Piojó (Atlántico)

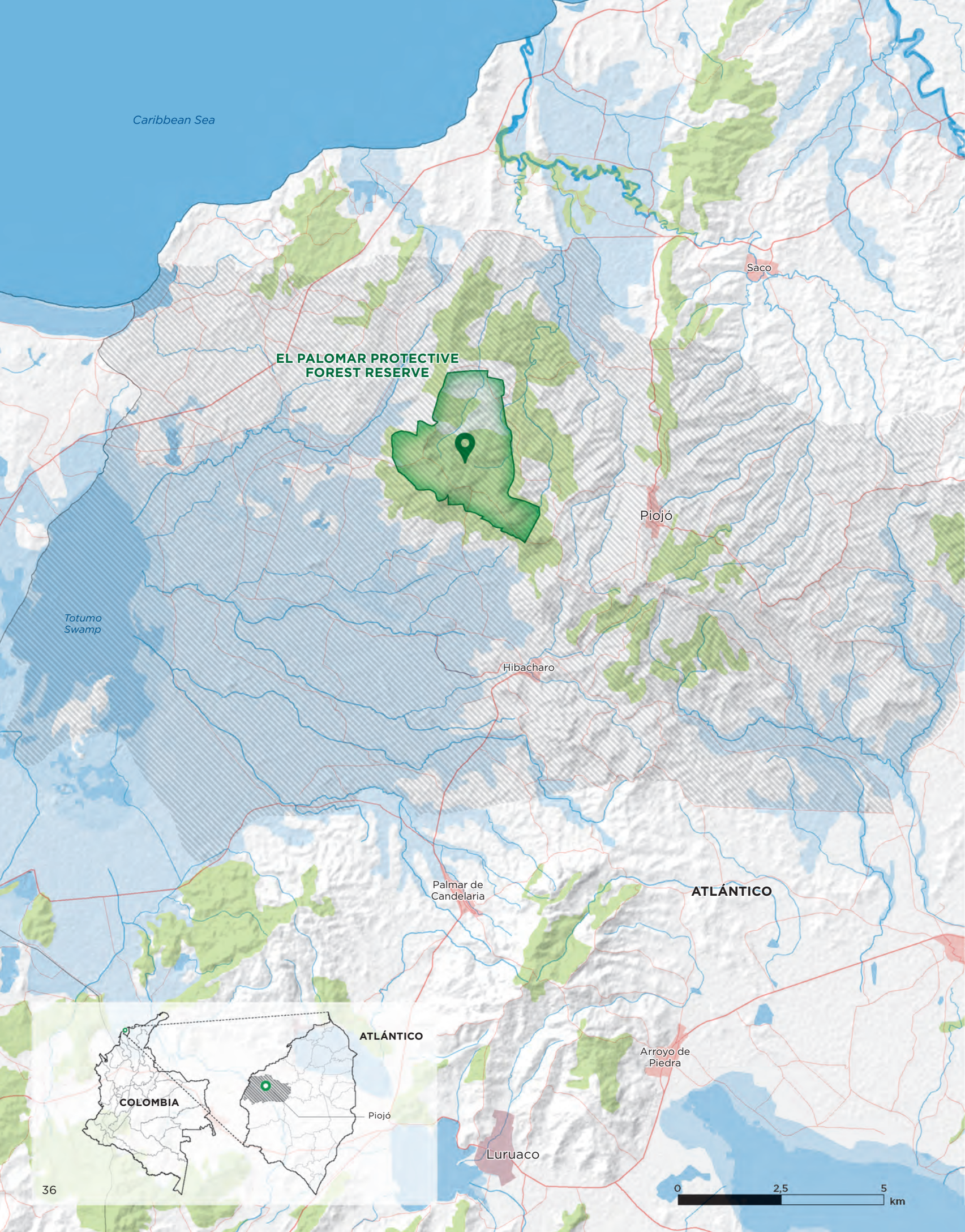
Lead Organization
Fundación Ecosistemas Secos de Colombia

PROTECTIVE FOREST RESERVE

EL PALOMAR



The declaration of a protected area within the El Palomar-Sierra Águila system, in the Peri-Caribbean Arid Belt biogeographical region, represents a commendable step forward in the conservation of the dry forests in the Colombian Caribbean. Among the emblematic assets of this protective forest reserve are species like the cotton-top tamarin (Saguinus oedipus), natural water springs and courses, and its archaeological heritage, which includes cultural objects, archaeological features and remains, tombs, and petroglyphs from the Mokaná ethnic group. This environmental and cultural transcendence makes this conservation initiative a noteworthy part of the management and consolidation of the Atlántico Departmental System of Protected Areas and the Caribbean Regional System of Protected Areas.


Caribbean Sea
EL PALOMAR PROTECTIVE FOREST RESERVE
Saco
Piojó
Totumo Swamp
Hibacharo
Palmar de Candelaria
ATLÁNTICO
Arroyo de Piedra
Luruaco
COLOMBIA
ATLÁNTICO
Piojó
0
2,5
5
km

THE PROTECTED AREA ON THE EL PALOMAR PEAK IS HOME TO NATURAL AND CULTURE TREASURES

Cotton-top tamarins can be found in the El Palomar Protective Forest Reserve, in the municipality of Piojó. El Palomar is a peak situated in the Atlántico department that still contains areas of dry forest, native palm groves, and trees like the breadnut (Brosimum alicastrum) and *carreto* (Aspidosperma polyneuron) that, together with the cotton-top tamarin, deer, water springs, and places of significant archaeological value, are the main assets that this third protected area created in Atlántico aims to protect. With the support of the Atlántico environmental authorities, Fundación Ecosistemas Secos de Colombia launched the project to create the reserve as part of the Conserva Colombia program in 2011.

A distinctive characteristic of this protected area is the archaeological remains of indigenous tombs and stone tools that have been found on the mountain, in particular on the El Palomar farm that the reserve was named after. Following advice from Barranquilla's Universidad del Norte, these remains were able to be identified as being of great cultural importance for the region, due to the strong likelihood that they are evidence of ancestral and historical occupation of the area by the Mokaná people. This information is relevant to modern-day Mokaná indigenous councils, who are seeking state recognition as an ethnic group and continuing their efforts to recover the land that would have made up their colonial reserve, which was invalidated in the 19th century.

Mr. Rafael González is the owner of the El Palomar farm, which protects the most pristine forests on the mountain. Born 79 years ago in Piojó, to this day he still climbs up El Palomar peak, where he has a house. From there, you can make out the Totumo swamp and the Caribbean sea, and those who have made the journey up there say that it feels so peaceful that it makes you want to stay. Mr. González was an important person throughout the process as a result of his extensive knowledge of the area and total support for the project. He is convinced of the need for conserving forests; in fact, since before it became a protected area, a few hectares of his land was taken up by pasture for dairy cattle farming, while he maintained an area of very well-conserved dry





forest nearly three times as large. He and his family are defenders of the forest, water, and wildlife, and they also have a number of projects on their farm such as fish farming in natural lagoons and nature tourism.

In order to develop the management plan for the protected area, Fundación Ecosistemas Secos called together the local environmental authorities, the communities of El Cerrito and Hibácharo, and the 19 owners of the farms inside the protected area. On November 22, 2013, the Atlántico Regional Autonomous Corporation adopted the agreement under which the El Palomar Regional Protective Forest Reserve was declared. The following year, Fundación Ecosistemas Secos launched a project through which they worked with 16 smallholder families in Hibácharo to create corridors to connect the dry forest. Through the planting of native tree species and the implementation of productive projects on the plots of land, this activity reduced the human pressure on the forest and fostered an awareness that led to hunting becoming shameful among the inhabitants. The community also began to organize themselves and formed their own association. After seeing the benefits of the project, 15 neighboring families became interested in taking part in a second phase, for which funds are currently being sought.



Area

9,674 ha

Location
Restrepo, Dagua and La Cumbre, Valle del Cauca

Lead Organization
Fundación GAIA

SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

GRANDE RIVER CANYON



No better climate for sun drying fruit can be found than the dry, warm air of the Grande River Canyon. In the small meadows along the Grande River, farmers plant tomatoes to supply markets in the city of Cali. A group of female heads of household interested in earning extra income made the most of two characteristics of their local area—its dry climate and production of tomatoes—and they joined forces to devote themselves to the business of selling sun-dried tomatoes. ASORIOGRANDE is the name of their association, and the initiative resulted from the entrepreneurship workshops that formed part of the project activities to declare a protected area along the canyon of the Grande River. Both directly and indirectly, the project fostered a shift in mentality towards a culture of more sustainable production, and it aims to provide agricultural products with added value.

THE COMMUNITIES RECOGNIZE THAT THEY LIVE IN A UNIQUE TERRITORY AND ARE MOVING FORWARD TOWARDS A CULTURE OF CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION



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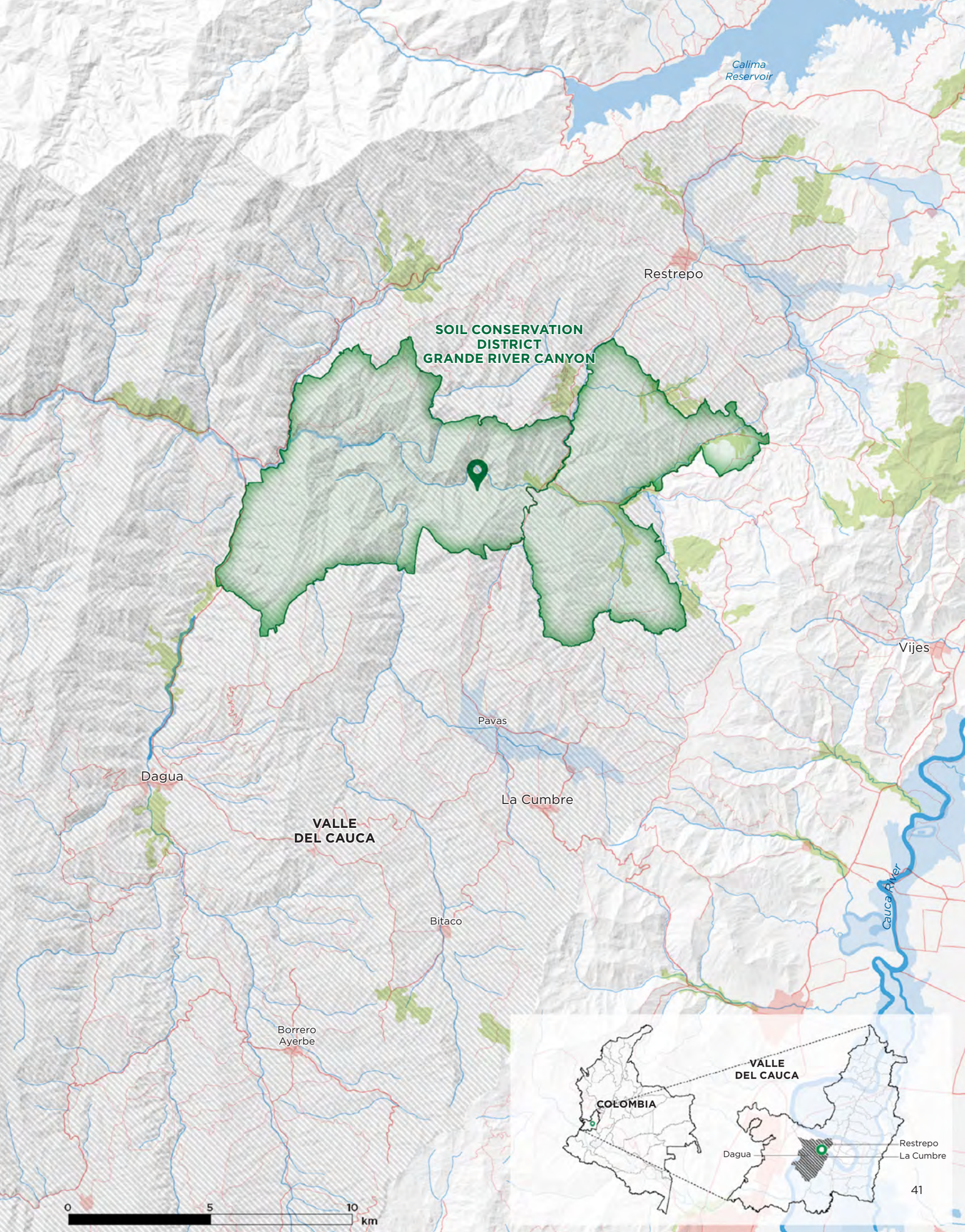
In 2014, the Valle del Cauca environmental authority, the CVC, declared the area as the Grande River Canyon Soil Conservation District (DCS). It is a geographical area that belongs to the municipalities of Dagua, Restrepo, La Cumbre, and part of Vijes. The Dagua tributary of the Grande River is set in a landscape of steep hillsides, shallow soils, hot temperatures, and very little rainfall. Visitors to the area are struck by the contrast that exists between the cloud forests, which extend down to an altitude of 1,500 meters above sea level in the upper part of the canyon, and the abrupt change in vegetation 20 meters below there to thorny scrub and drought-adapted grassland. This is a region that still hosts significant areas of forest and scrub, in addition to several cactus species that can only be found in the canyon, such as the zapallito cactus and the new type of orchid that the biologists discovered during the project. At present, it is the protected area with the largest area of forest and dry scrub in the region.

Both of the Conserva Colombia projects to declare the protected area and subsequently expand it were led by Fundación Gaia in 2012 and 2013, with the support of the CVC and the municipal authorities. Throughout both projects, the support of community organizations and the commitment of the UMATA public officials, particularly from Restrepo and La Cumbre, was evident. Residents of the municipalities have taken ownership of the protected area to such a degree that the program of their annual festivals mentions it and features activities like walks, food fairs, and mountain biking trips, so that everyone knows that they have a protected area in their municipality and value it.

The co-management committee for the conservation district is formed by the CVC, the community action boards of the villages, water supply boards, representatives from educational institutions, community grassroots environmental organizations, and the UMATA offices from the municipalities, among others. The CVC allocated resources to the committee that met in July 2017, and to an initial project that aims to provide interested parties from the protected area with guidance on the creation of a nature tourism program.

Nowadays, the local people appreciate what they previously viewed as worthless expanses of *charrascal*, as the thorny scrub is known locally. The community itself has realized the importance of the ecosystem in the canyon, a very necessary lesson given that the fragility of the soil and the steep slopes—used for extensive livestock farming and growing crops like pineapples—have caused a severe erosion problem and accelerated soil loss on many hillsides.

During colonial times, the Grande River Canyon was an important trade route between Buenaventura and Cali, as shown by maps, the ruins found on some farms, and the names of certain places in the region. During the process of declaring the protected area, the community began to see their environment through different eyes and envision their territory as a place for nature tourism and environmentally-friendly agriculture.


Calima
Reservoir
Restrepo
SOIL CONSERVATION
DISTRICT
GRANDE RIVER CANYON
Vijes
Pavas
Dagua
La Cumbre
VALLE
DEL CAUCA
Cauca River
Bitaco
Borrero
Ayerbe
0
5
10
km
COLOMBIA
VALLE
DEL CAUCA
Dagua
Restrepo
La Cumbre



Area

3,602 ha

Location
Riohacha and Manaure
(La Guajira)

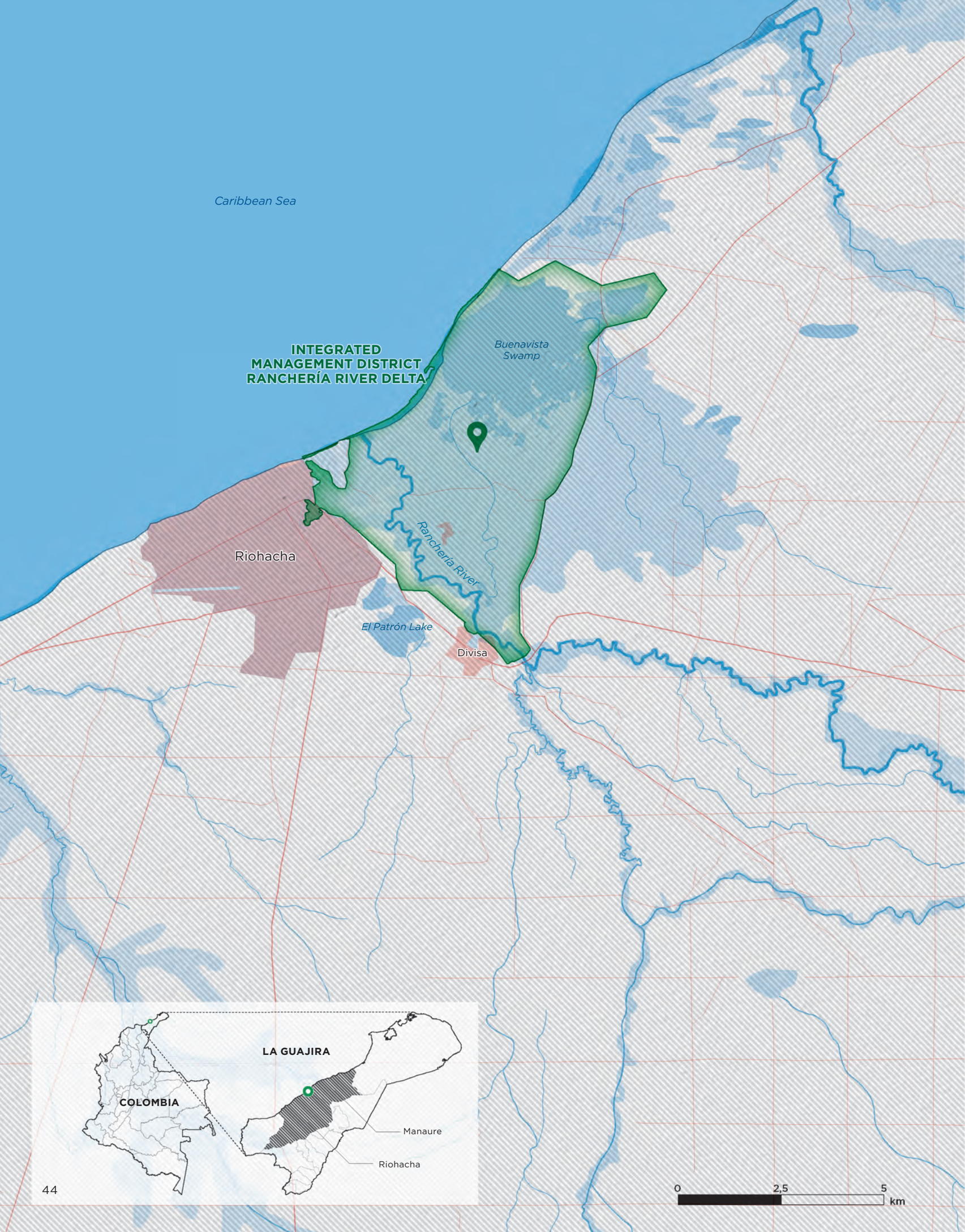
Lead Organization
Fundación Herencia
Ambiental Caribe

INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

RANCHERÍA RIVER DELTA



The Ranchería River in La Guajira flows into the Caribbean Sea, forming a delta called the Valle de los Cangrejos. The Riíto tributary marks the boundary between the urban area of Riohacha and the start of the Wayúu reserve in the Mid and Upper Guajira. Further north, the tributary known as the Pancho River feeds into the Buenavista swamp.


Caribbean Sea
INTEGRATED
MANAGEMENT DISTRICT
RANCHERÍA RIVER DELTA
Buenavista
Swamp
Riohacha
Ranchería River
El Patrón Lake
Divisa
LA GUAJIRA
COLOMBIA
Manaure
Riohacha
0
2,5
5
km

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE FROM WAYÚU TERRITORIES AND NEIGHBORHOOD LEADERS FROM RIOHACHA ARE COMMITTED TO THE CONSERVATION OF THE RANCHERÍA RIVER DELTA.

The Ranchería River in La Guajira runs into the Caribbean sea, forming a delta called the Valle de los Cangrejos. The Riíto tributary marks the boundary between the urban area of Riohacha and the start of the Wayúu reserve in the Mid and Upper Guajira. Further north, the tributary known as the Pancho River feeds into the Buenavista swamp. Alejandra, a resident of the Villa Fátima neighborhood of Riohacha, has her house flooded frequently when the Salada lake, which belongs to the delta, bursts its banks. This causes her great concern because the lake is polluted. On the other side of the Riíto tributary, a Wayúu man with the surname Pushaina lives on the land of his *apüshii*, or maternal family. He tends to his few goats and sheep, fishes in lakes in the delta, and supplements his income by picking blue crabs in the mangroves, selling wild birds, and doing paid work. In this part of the delta, fishing is in continuous decline and the floods caused by the Ranchería River now happen more frequently. The aim of establishing a protected area in the delta of the Ranchería River is use integrated management to reduce its environmental degradation, such as its diminished fishing capacity and ability to regulate floodwater. It is also intended to protect mangroves, the blue crab and the dry ecosystems of the delta, which still exist but are highly endangered. These ecosystems make it possible for the Wayúu way of life to exist on the ranches in the delta.

While the communities in urban areas and the Wayúu reserve experience similar environmental problems linked to the condition of the river delta, they have a different relationship with natural resources. The concerns of residents of urban neighborhoods are due to hygiene and safety, whereas for the 25 Wayúu communities who live in the delta they are related to subsistence, territory, and healthcare. As a consequence, getting these highly disparate communities to unite around a single interest was vital for the declaration of a protected area in the region. This process began in 2012 with the project of the Conserva Colombia program, which was overseen by Fundación Herencia Ambiental Caribe and co-funded by Corpogujira in partnership with Carbones del Cerrejón.

A key aspect of the project was the prior consultation process with the Wayúu indigenous authorities in the area. Fundación Herencia Ambiental Caribe learnt an early lesson upon seeing that public officials from the Interior Ministry were unfamiliar with projects to declare local protected areas. At first, to the Wayúu community it was not clear that the project aimed to improve the environmental situation in their territory, and instead they wanted to discuss financial arrangements and set quotas as they do with many companies during prior consultations. The communities initially showed reluctance as they are frustrated when it proves difficult to turn agreements into reality when working with state entities. People slowly became motivated, and they were satisfied by the project after understanding that the creation of a protected area would improve their wellbeing.

Experience sharing with communities who were already working with protected areas was key to this process. The traditional authorities and leaders took part in a visit to the Los Flamencos Flora and Fauna Sanctuary to learn, through the words of other Wayuu people, about their experience of living in a protected area. This helped them to realize that they could benefit greatly in the future. After three months of consultation, the Wayúu people expressed their gratitude for the respect shown to them, and agreed on the protected area in their territory.

Work with urban communities in Riohacha had begun a few years before, when Fundación Herencia Ambiental Caribe produced an urban wetland management plan, one of whose focuses was on getting residents to take ownership of the territory. The urban community is committed to the protected area and hopes to be included through the community action boards in order to play an active part in the planning of projects related to it.

Corpoguajira declared the Ranchería River Delta Integrated Management District (DMI) in 2014. In partnership with other organizations, Corpoguajira has recently carried out a cleanup campaign in the delta and the Salada lake. They have also announced environmental awareness-raising days and conservation projects. A great deal of work remains to be done in the DMI, and the formation of a co-management committee between the environmental authorities, urban communities, and the Wayúu population—as proposed in the management plan—is essential. To this end, leadership needs to be strengthened and leaders should be trained in project development, management, and monitoring.



Area

32,799 ha

Location
Riohacha, Manaure, Maicao, and Albania (La Guajira)

Lead Organization
Fundación BIOTA

INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

RANCHERÍA RIVER LOWER BASIN



Just before sunrise, Wayúu families assemble in the kitchen to drink sugary coffee and ask each other: what did you dream about? Dreams are interpreted and often offer a warning of some kind of danger, in addition to instructions about what to do to avoid it. This other world is woven into the fabric of the territory, and is a significant presence in Wayúu life. The Wayúu territory is a network of relationships between humans and '*un-mundo-otro*' (one-other-world) beings, relationships that are woven between families, people, water sources, sacred places, and family burial plots. A good life is defined as one with access to water and being able to own healthy animals, which in turn allows for reciprocal relationships through vigils. Wayúu vegetable gardens can be planted on the dry creek beds, making the most of the high water table, or in places where water has a more permanent presence. The activities are complemented by salaried employees of Carbones del Cerrejón or of one of its foundations, who are looking to establish a more fluid relationship with the communities living in the company's area of influence. Other economic activities in the region include the exploitation of sand and gravel in the Ranchería River, timber, coal, and wildlife. The primary concern of the Wayúu people is their territory; they have a keen interest in protecting their way of life and their ancestral land and they want to continue to be the owners of it.

NUMEROUS INTERESTS COMPETING FOR A SINGLE TERRITORY: MINING, WATER, AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION, AND THE PROTECTON OF WAYÚU TERRITORY

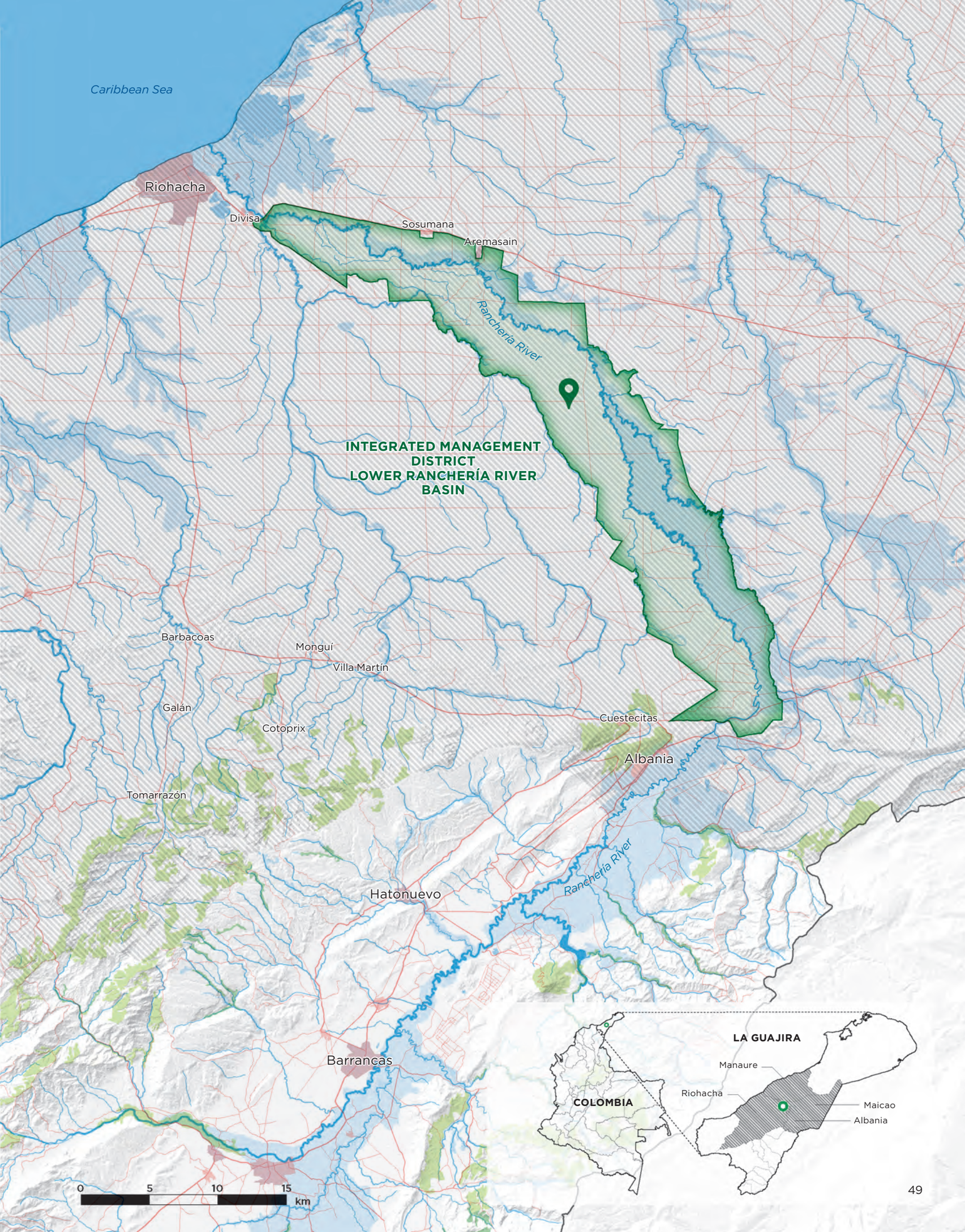
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In La Guajira, a large proportion of the ancestral Wayúu territory is designated as an indigenous reserve, which overlaps with three national protected areas: The Macuira National Park, the Bahía Portete National Park, and the Los Flamencos Flora and Fauna Sanctuary. The relationship between ethnic territories and protected areas is not without conflict, but it is based on respect and the common interests found in both conservation and cultural priorities. The Wayúu value this reciprocal relationship, which also helps them to protect their territory against extractive interests that could prove detrimental to them.

The lower basin of the Ranchería River is classified as a priority conservation area in planning for the basin, in the Caribbean Regional System of Protected Areas and at the national level. Despite being an area of high use, dry forest and thorny scrub still remain, as do large numbers of resident and migratory birds. The river is vital to the productive activities that take place along its banks and in its coastal lagoons. As part of the Conserva Colombia program, and with the support of Corpoguajira and in partnership with Carbones del Cerrejón, in 2012 Fundación Biota carried out the prior studies and produced the management plan for the declaration of the lower basin of the Ranchería River as a protected area. From the outset, the project was able to count on the support of Wayúu leaders and traditional authorities, due to its importance for their livelihoods.

The area covered by the project includes the right bank of the Ranchería River, which is part of the Wayúu reserve in the Mid and Upper Guajira, and the 4 de Noviembre reserve in its southern section. In total, almost 80% of the proposed territory is reserve land that is home to 105 Wayúu communities. For this reason, a substantial part of the efforts were focused on prior consultation with the traditional authorities, leaders, and spokespeople in the Wayúu communities in order to present the project and reach agreements regarding the possibility of establishing the protected area in their territory. The end result was positive.

The project witnessed the reality of how the communities' conservation interests and the interests of the mining industry interacted. Fundación Biota, together with spokespeople chosen by the Wayúu, studied the borders of the proposed protected area, the use made of the territory, and the existing environmental issues. The agreed borders included a section that was of interest to Carbones del Cerrejón. Following prolonged negotiations and the involvement of Corpoguajira, both parties finally came to an agreement regarding the location of the border. In December 2014, Corpoguajira declared the Lower Ranchería River Basin DMI, and in alliance with a range of universities and foundations it aims to enhance monitoring and control and carry out conservation actions in the area. In 2016, 51 local environmental monitors were certified for this purpose. The challenge going forward will be to formalize a participation strategy for joint and coordinated management between the traditional Wayúu authorities and the public environmental authorities.


Caribbean Sea
Riohacha
Divisa
Sosumana
Aremasain
Ranchería River
INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT DISTRICT LOWER RANCHERÍA RIVER BASIN
Barbacoas
Monguí
Villa Martín
Galán
Cotoprix
Cuestecitas
Albania
Tomarrazón
Hatonuevo
Ranchería River
Barrancas
LA GUAJIRA
Manaure
Riohacha
COLOMBIA
Maicao
Albania
0
5
10
15
km



Area

196 ha

Location
Dagua, Valle del Cauca

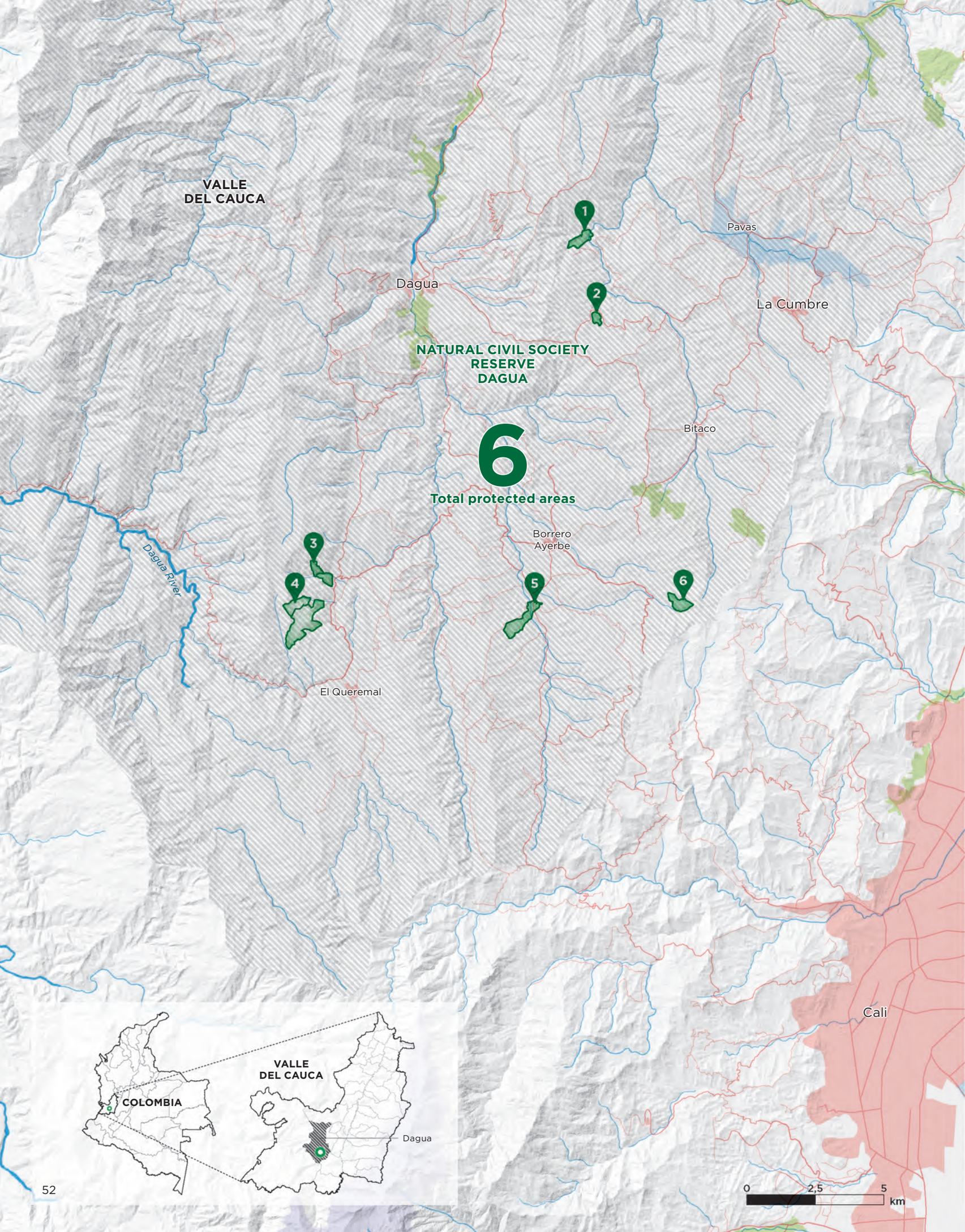
Lead Organization
Corfopal

NATURAL CIVIL SOCIETY RESERVE

DAGUA



Corfopal, the Pacific Forest Corporation, is a local organization from the municipality of Dagua that has been carrying out water conservation work with communities for close to 20 years. It also provides support for the process of registering private natural reserves with the Colombian National Park Service. Water shortages in Dagua and La Cumbre lead a lot of people to take an interest in conserving it. In particular, a leader from the township of San José del Salado was very alert to opportunities to turn his land into reserves. His wish was granted when the support project for the creation of private reserves began as part of the Conserva Colombia program. The leader called his neighbors together, and soon there were several interested parties who took part in the project with other landowners in the municipality of La Cumbre. Farms that are now reserves feature livestock farming for milk and meat, tracts of native forest, and enormous motivation on the part of residents to take care of their local watersheds.


VALLE
DEL CAUCA
Pavas
Dagua
La Cumbre
NATURAL CIVIL SOCIETY
RESERVE
DAGUA
6
Total protected areas
Bitaco
Borrero
Ayerbe
Dagua River
El Queremal
Cali
1
2
3
4
5
6
COLOMBIA
VALLE
DEL CAUCA
Dagua
0
2,5
5
km

PROTECTING WATER AND THE REMAINING FRAGMENTS OF FOREST IS POSSIBLE WITH COMMITTED LANDOWNERS AND OPPORTUNITIES TO TRANSFORM THEIR PRODUCTION SYSTEMS





Corfopal, the Pacific Forest Corporation, is a local organization from the municipality of Dagua that has been carrying out water conservation work with communities for close to 20 years. It also provides support for the process of registering private natural reserves with the Colombian National Park Service. Water shortages in Dagua and La Cumbre lead a lot of people to take an interest in conserving it. In particular, a leader from the township of San José del Salado was very alert to opportunities to turn his land into reserves. His wish was granted when the support project for the creation of private reserves began as part of the Conserva Colombia program. The leader called his neighbors together, and soon there were several interested parties who took part in the project with other landowners in the municipality of La Cumbre. Farms that are now reserves feature livestock farming for milk and meat, tracts of native forest, and enormous motivation on the part of residents to take care of their local watersheds.

In the San Antonio Reserve in the municipality of Dagua, its owner Fabiola showed her visitors how she restored the guadua grove on her farm in six years; now she farms guadua sustainably, has livestock on wooded pasture, breeds fish, and has a vegetable garden. The landowners who were interested in turning their own farms into Natural Civil Society Reserves (RNSC) visited the reserve as part of the Conserva Colombia project, and were pleasantly surprised by what a green lung the San Antonio farm is amid all the surrounding lots. They left with their hearts filled with excitement, and a desire to transform their production systems and protect their own watersheds by planting trees and guadua.

In 2013, the project to formalize the conservation agreements and register the private reserves with the National Park Service got underway. Corfopal headed the project in partnership with Fundación GAIA and with the support of the Valle del Cauca environmental authority, the CVC. A personalized process was employed with the farms, with plot-to-plot visits during which residents drew up maps, planned the zoning, and produced management plans. Today, they feel proud of possessing all these tools when making decisions.

Once the reserves had been registered as part of the project, Corfopal integrated them into a number of other projects. For example, the owner of a reserve in Dagua is receiving BancO2 benefits, while in five other reserves Corfopal is now being supported by the CVC to complete projects from the management plans in order to improve their productive activities. They will soon also visit the natural reserve of the Serraniagua community environmental organization in El Cairo in the Valle del Cauca department.



Area

912 ha

Location
Dagua (Valle del Cauca)

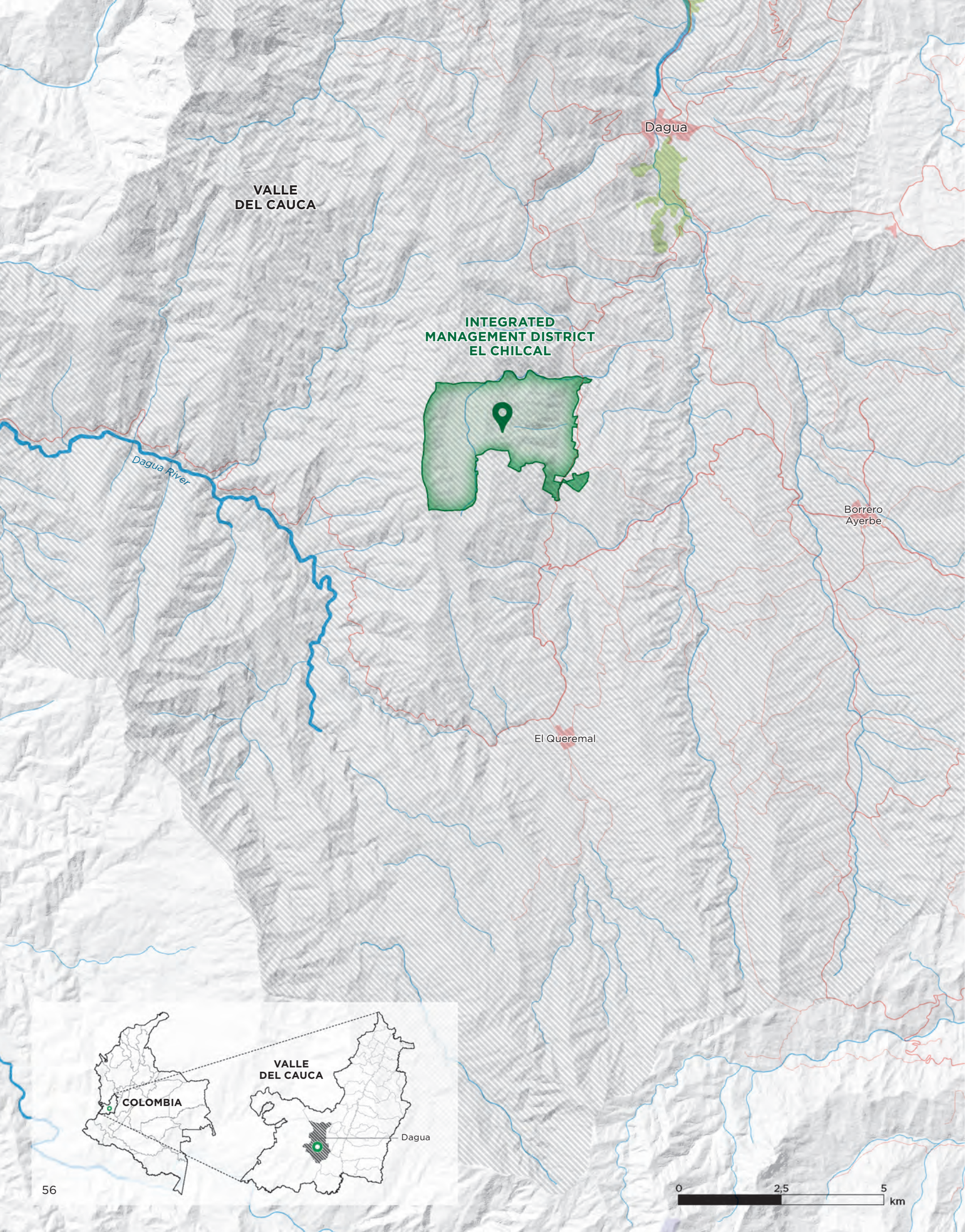
Lead Organization
Fundación GAIA

INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

EL CHILCAL



The history of the famous pandebono from Cali originated in the 19th century in a hacienda located in the Limonar township of the Dagua municipality. The hacienda was called El Bono and had dairy cattle and was located on the banks of the Española stream on the road to Dagua. The story goes that the hacienda's matron and cook invented a recipe for a corn, cheese, and egg bread that quickly became famous. At the roadside stand, people used to stop by only for the bread, and in Cali, it would sell out as soon as they heard the announcement: The "pan de Bono"! The "pan de Bono"! Dairy farming was predominant at that time. In the Chilcal area, which borders the Esperanza stream, there is still extensive cattle ranching for milk and beef, mixed with intensive production areas of pineapple, tomato, some coffee, and pine and eucalyptus forest crops. While it is a very productive area, despite the environmental problems of erosion and water pollution, it also has important relicts of forests following the course of the streams, and of mountain forest adapted to dry conditions, which still harbor a great diversity of animals and plants and protect the water in the upper basin of the Dagua River.


Dagua
VALLE
DEL CAUCA
INTEGRATED
MANAGEMENT DISTRICT
EL CHILCAL
Dagua River
Borrero
Ayerbe
El Queremal
VALLE
DEL CAUCA
COLOMBIA
Dagua
0
2,5
5
km

THE COMMUNITY RENEWS THEIR OWNERSHIP OF THEIR TERRITORY AND THE NEWLY DISCOVERED ORCHID FOR SCIENCE

The history of the famous pandebono from Cali originated in the 19th century in a hacienda located in the Limonar township of the Dagua municipality. The hacienda was called El Bono and had dairy cattle and was located on the banks of the Española stream on the road to Dagua. The story goes that the hacienda's matron and cook invented a recipe for a corn, cheese, and egg bread that quickly became famous. At the roadside stand, people used to stop by only for the bread, and in Cali, it would sell out as soon as they heard the announcement: The "pan de Bono"! The "pan de Bono"! Dairy farming was predominant at that time. In the Chilcal area, which borders the Esperanza stream, there is still extensive cattle ranching for milk and beef, mixed with intensive production areas of pineapple, tomato, some coffee, and pine and eucalyptus forest crops. While it is a very productive area, despite the environmental problems of erosion and water pollution, it also has important relicts of forests following the course of the streams, and of mountain forest adapted to dry conditions, which still harbor a great diversity of animals and plants and protect the water in the upper basin of the Dagua River.

The Chilcal community and its local leaders dreamed that their village would receive more attention because it is part of the headwaters of the Dagua River and because in 2006 an environmental planning exercise for Valle del Cauca led by the Valle del Cauca Environmental Authority (CVC) had identified it as part of a key conservation area. For this reason, upon learning of the Conserva Colombia call for proposals in 2013, Corfopal partnered with Fundación GAIA, which led the Conserva Colombia project leading to the declaration of the protected area and also received financial support from the municipality of Dagua and the CVC.

As part of the project, Fundación GAIA convened and worked with the local community and companies with an interest in the area, such as Cartón de Colombia, Epsa, and Ecopetrol. Out of conviction, many people in the area have some areas set aside for conservation. Therefore, the project encouraged people not to think about farms in isolation, but to discover how one farm could be linked to other farms. What was more natural was to connect the farms through the forest relicts near water sources. Continued learning about the protected areas with the landowners is needed to dispel the doubts about whether it will affect their ability to sell their land, or whether they will be prohibited from all productive activities.

The community highly valued the study of animals and plants in their community. The biologists were very involved with the community and did the tours with them. In a series of meetings at the end, the community was able to see photos, comment, ask questions, and learn about the value of each animal that had been found. They had all seen birds, but now they knew their importance in the ecosystem. It was very exciting for them to discover an orchid unique to that place and for the community to take part in its baptism. In honor of the Chilcal, they gave it the scientific name Epidendrum Chilcalorum. Finally, having information from the territory on native vegetation, plants, and animals was a foundation for subsequent projects.

The environmental authority—the CVC—declared the El Chilcal Integrated Management District (DMI) in 2016, and shortly thereafter its co-management committee started operations. It is made up of representatives of the aqueduct users, the school, the community action board, three local NGOs, coffee growers, the CVC, and the Dagua Mayor's Office, among others. Many people arrive and others leave, but little by little it picks up. As the committee takes shape, its members are keen to explore the practical applications in the territory. For example, the coffee growers' representative already has resources to fence off water sources, and Corfopal has managed some conservation projects. The CVC established an item in its Four-Year Action Plan to prepare and strengthen the co-management committees in its jurisdiction.

By 2018, a project will begin to delimit the DMI in the territory and develop signage for the protected area so that both residents and visitors know where they are and how to behave. There are still many difficulties, especially in achieving projects that focus on transitioning from the use of agrochemicals to more environmentally friendly options or livestock reconversion, but leaders and entities in the area are interested and have the management capacity needed, which is a point in favor of the area's conservation.



Orinoco Savannas

Area

7,665 ha

Location
Puerto Carreño
and La Primavera, (Vichada)

Lead Organization
Fundación Palmarito

NATURAL CIVIL SOCIETY RESERVE

VICHADA



Private conservation plays a key role where land use is undergoing rapid change or where most of the plant and animal diversity is on private land. This is the case in the department of Vichada, where large-scale productive products such as African palm, soybean, corn, and forestry plantations are promoted by the State and implemented by large companies. The only national protected area in the high plains is El Tuparro National Park, the heart of the Biosphere Reserve with the same name. Although it is one of the largest protected areas in the country, it is isolated in the task of conserving the ecosystems of natural grassland savannas, moriche palm areas, and gallery forests. The key to conservation in the Orinoquia is through private conservation partnerships. Private reserves increase conservation efforts and create connections between high plain ecosystems that are essential for the survival of plants and animals. Conserva Colombia, through Fundación Palmarito Casanare, supported the registration of six properties with the National Park Service as Natural Civil Society Reserves in order to connect the high plains landscape with El Tuparro National Park.

CIVIL SOCIETY CONNECTS ECOSYSTEMS IN THE VICHADA HIGH PLAINS.

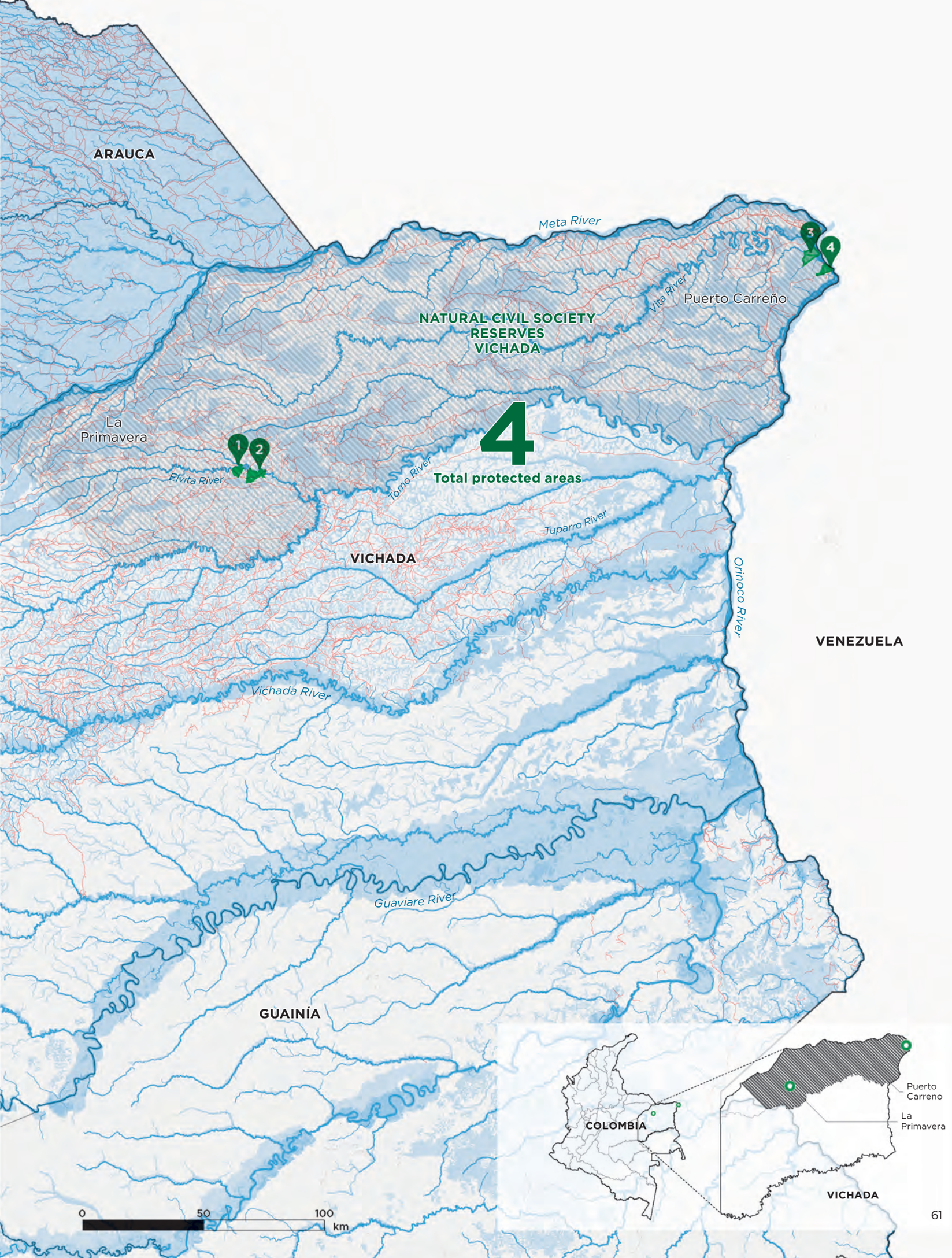




Private conservation plays a key role where land use is undergoing rapid change or where most of the plant and animal diversity is on private land. This is the case in the department of Vichada, where large-scale productive products such as African palm, soybean, corn, and forestry plantations are promoted by the State and implemented by large companies. The only national protected area in the high plains is El Tuparro National Park, the heart of the Biosphere Reserve with the same name. Although it is one of the largest protected areas in the country, it is isolated in the task of conserving the ecosystems of natural grassland savannas, moriche palm areas, and gallery forests. The key to conservation in the Orinoquia is through private conservation partnerships. Private reserves increase conservation efforts and create connections between high plain ecosystems that are essential for the survival of plants and animals. Conserva Colombia, through Fundación Palmarito Casanare, supported the registration of six properties with the National Park Service as Natural Civil Society Reserves in order to connect the high plains landscape with El Tuparro National Park.

The first two properties registered as reserves are El Pañuelo and Campanas, which are part of the Bojonawi Nature Reserve, created in 2004 by Fundación Omacha, an organization with a long history of conservation work in the country. Research, environmental education, and tourism activities are carried out in the reserve. Its objective is the conservation of savannas and forests, land animals such as deer, ocelots, and tapirs, and otters, turtles, and alligators in El Pañuelo lake. The third property they registered is La Ventana Nature Reserve, which aims to combine extensive cattle ranching with nature tourism, where the main attraction is an area with huge rocks with large round holes, known as “moyas.” These reserves are found on the southern border of El Tuparro National Park, on the Orinoco riverbank, and were already part of the Orinoquia Node of the Natural Civil Society Reserve Network (RESNATUR). They are surrounded by reserves and contain sacred and other culturally important sites, such as the cave paintings in La Ventana Reserve. Because of this and their location in areas historically used for hunting and fishing, the registration document recommends creating spaces for social gatherings and intercultural coexistence.

Further west, on the Gavilán and Elvita rivers, which flow into the Tomo river before reaching the Tuparro Park boundary, are the other three reserves (El Gavilán, Cachicamo, and Santana) that the project helped to register as Natural Civil Society Reserves. These reserves are owned by private companies and are used for extensive cattle ranching in the savannas and large areas of gallery forests that are home to a wealth of plants and key animals such as the Orinoco crocodile. This project is an example of the variety of approaches that private conservation can have as a conservation alternative, made tangible through the formalization of private reserves— from individual landowner efforts, non-governmental or non-profit organizations with or without an environmental emphasis, to corporate commitments. All of these private reserves contribute to connecting the ecosystems in the Vichada high plains.


ARAUCA
Meta River
Vita River
Puerto Carreño
NATURAL CIVIL SOCIETY
RESERVES
VICHADA
4
Total protected areas
La
Primavera
Elvita River
Tomo River
Tuparro River
VICHADA
Orinoco River
VENEZUELA
Vichada River
Guaviare River
GUAINÍA
COLOMBIA
Puerto
Carreno
La
Primavera
VICHADA
0
50
100
km



Area

27,072 ha

Location
Cantagallo and San Pablo (Bolívar), and Yondó (Antioquia)

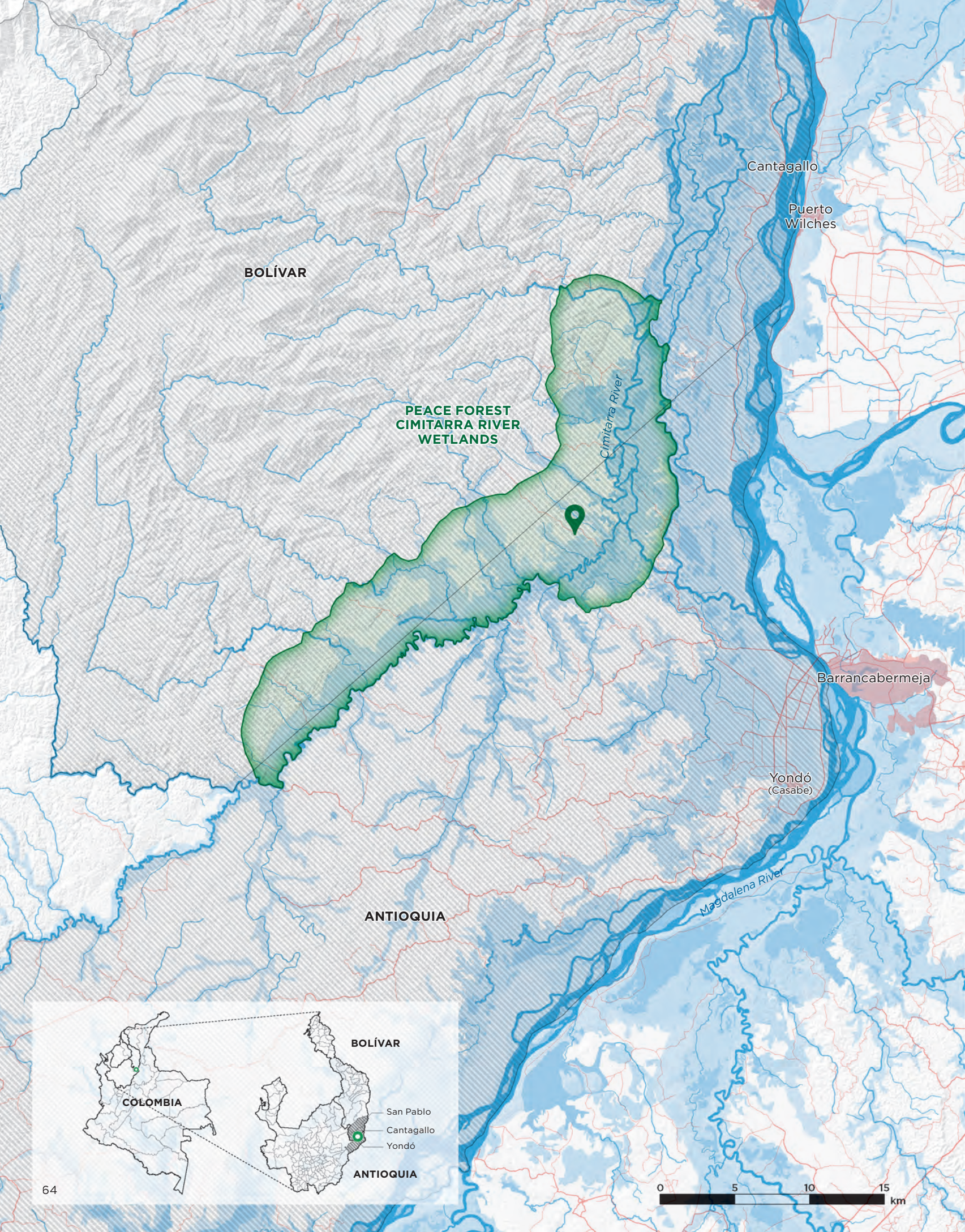
Lead Organization
Cimitarra River Valley Farmers' Association (ACVC, Asociación Campesina del Valle del Río Cimitarra)

PEACE FOREST

CIMITARRA RIVER WETLANDS



The swamp complex and its forests of the Cimitarra river are key to the livelihoods of many of the inhabitants of the Magdalena Medio and to the connectivity of species between the San Lucas mountain range and the Magdalena valley. The Cimitarra river valley is located in the Magdalena Medio region to the east of the San Lucas mountain range. It has great natural and social wealth and is home to a group of peasant farmers from different regions of the country. The peasant farming communities have had community agreements to conserve these wetlands and their forests since the colonization of the area began, and now when the reduction of the armed conflict allowed it, the Cimitarra River Valley Farmers' Association (ACVC) is committed to the knowledge and formal defense of the swamps. For the ACVC, planning the development of its reserve was not disconnected from the conservation of its territory, water, and biodiversity.


Cantagallo
Puerto Wilches
BOLÍVAR
PEACE FOREST
CIMITARRA RIVER
WETLANDS
Cimitarra River
Barrancabermeja
Yondó
(Casabe)
Magdalena River
ANTIOQUIA
COLOMBIA
BOLÍVAR
San Pablo
Cantagallo
Yondó
ANTIOQUIA
0
5
10
15
km

PIONEERING FARMER COMMUNITIES IN THE PROTECTION OF A PEASANT FARMING RESERVE.

The swamp complex and its forests of the Cimitarra river are key to the livelihoods of many of the inhabitants of the Magdalena Medio and to the connectivity of species between the San Lucas mountain range and the Magdalena valley. The Cimitarra river valley is located in the Magdalena Medio region to the east of the San Lucas mountain range. It has great natural and social wealth and is home to a group of peasant farmers from different regions of the country. The peasant farming communities have had community agreements to conserve these wetlands and their forests since the colonization of the area began, and now when the reduction of the armed conflict allowed it, the Cimitarra River Valley Farmers' Association (ACVC) is committed to the knowledge and formal defense of the swamps. For the ACVC, planning the development of its reserve was not disconnected from the conservation of its territory, water, and biodiversity.

Twenty-one years ago, in 1996, farmers tired of being constantly caught in the crossfire between the army, guerillas, and paramilitaries, suffering the horrors of war, decided to organize and work together to resist violence, defend their territory, living a dignified life, and human rights. So, they created the ACVC, a farming and mining-based social organization, and defined the Peasant Farmer Reserve Zone in the Cimitarra River Valley (abbreviated ZRC-VRC). This area includes 134 villages in the municipalities of Segovia, Remedios, and Yondó in Antioquia, and Cantagallo and San Pablo in southern Bolívar. Since then, the farmers' association, ACVC, has faced innumerable difficulties, human losses, and persecutions. In 2010, they won the National Peace Prize, and in 2011, the national government, through the Colombian Institute for Rural Development (INCODER), re-legitimized the Peasant Farmer Reserve Zone.

In mid-2016, with the intention of initiating a process towards formal conservation of the wetlands in Caño Negro and the Cimitarra River, the farmers' association (ACVC) joined the Conserva Colombia program. With this financial support, ACVC created research partnerships with several organizations and universities and led the project to scientifically understand the diversity of plants and animals present in the swamps and their inhabitants' social and economic characteristics. They found, for example, that 40% of the fish species in the swamps are part of the local diet, and that at least 30% more have ornamental potential. In addition, they found a great variety of animal species, some that only live in Colombia or in that region, or that are in danger of extinction, such as the tapir, the jaguar, the brown spider monkey, the red heron, and the blue-billed curassow, as well as the Magdalena turtle and the Boyacá spiny mouse. The studies confirmed the importance of the swamp zone as a basis for the livelihoods of fishermen and peasant farmers in the area, and as a refuge for endangered animals and plants.

The process led by the ACVC was different from other projects because the conservation initiative was born from the peasant organization and its rural decision-making system. For this reason, the project did not include workshops to make local agreements, because from the beginning it already had the support and interest of the entire community and only the scientific support remained to be included.

The conservation of the Cimitarra River wetlands is the first community-based peasant farmer initiative in the country in a Peasant Farmer Reserve Zone, in which the effort to make conservation tangible is an integral part of its 2012-2022 sustainable development plan. The plan includes what the communities hope to build as a territory and identifies the necessary conservation areas.

The great challenge now is bringing the ACVC farmers' association's initiative to fruition with all the legal, political, and public order obstacles and challenges. The ACVC is aware of the need for the local conservation agreements to be formally recognized by the regional environmental authorities in Antioquia and Bolívar. They hope that they will respond and support this local initiative. Today, with the social and biological information gathered, the next step is to explore the most appropriate environmental protection figure for this wetland area. What is important is that it also guarantees that the Peasant Farmer Reserve Zone is respected, and that it allows the peasants to be an active part of the decision making process regarding the swamps in order to combine the sustainable use of their resources and their active protection.



Orinoco Savannas

Area

1,025 ha

Location
Orocué, (Casanare)

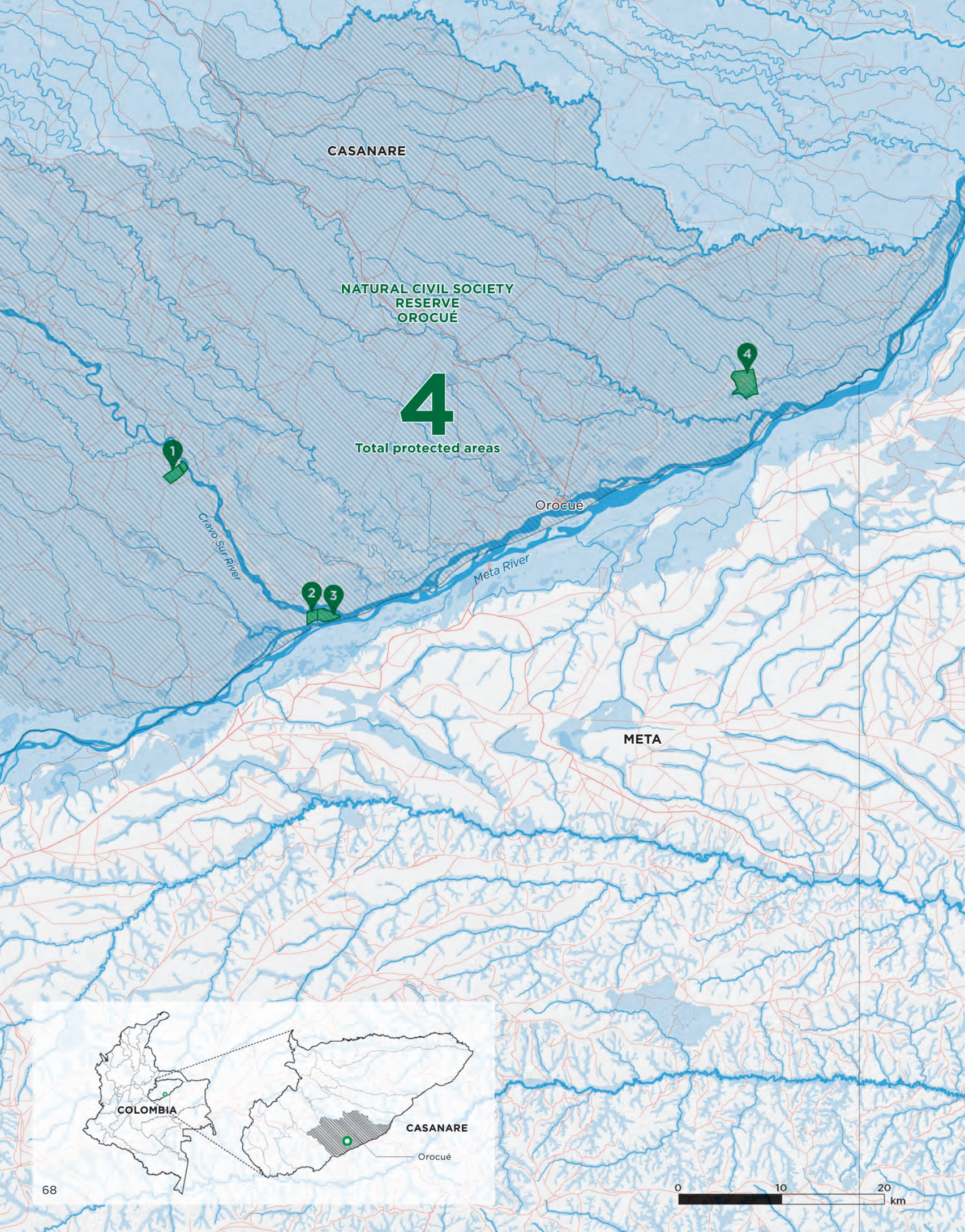
Lead Organization
Fundación Palmarito

NATURAL CIVIL SOCIETY RESERVE

OROCUÉ



In the Casanare plains, more and more landowners are interested in conservation on their lands. Voluntary conservation is an option for anyone in Colombia who has land with natural habitats on their farm. In 2007, the landowners registered Hato Palmarito as a Natural Civil Society Reserve (RNSC) with the National Park Service. The 2,800-hectare Palmarito Natural Reserve, located on the left bank of the Cravo Sur River before it flows into the Meta River, is an example of conservation and livestock production in a landscape dominated by oil exploitation. A year later, in 2008, the Fundación Palmarito Casanare was created, which has projects for the recovery of the plains alligator and the arrau turtle, and manages the Wisirare park. One of its missions is to encourage the creation of natural civil society reserves in the Eastern Plains.


CASANARE
NATURAL CIVIL SOCIETY RESERVE OROCUÉ
4
Total protected areas
1
2
3
4
Orocué
Cravo Sur River
Meta River
META
COLOMBIA
CASANARE
Orocué
0
10
20
km

A NATURE RESERVE THAT MOTIVATES ITS NEIGHBORS TO CREATE OTHER PRIVATE RESERVES.

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The Fundación Palmarito has been working for several years with the owners of the neighboring ranches to raise awareness about the importance of conservation and production, as well as the added advantage of being a natural civil society reserve for the protection of their lands from oil exploitation. As part of the Conserva Colombia program, Fundación Palmarito began a project in 2013 to promote the creation of private reserves in the municipality of Orocué, which ended successfully with the registration of four ranches in 2014 and 2015. Three of the reserves are located on the Cravo Sur River and the fourth is on the Paravare River. All of the reserves conserve flooded savannas and their surrounding forests, ecosystems that are not protected by any other type of regional or national protected area. This situation reveals the importance of private conservation as a complement to public conservation.

The project's team of biologists went to each farm to determine what type of plant, bird, and fish species they harbor. For example, they found fish important for subsistence, commercial purposes, and sport fishing. On the Corocito ranch, they found a very interesting group of birds, some of which are native to the plains, but also Amazonian and Caribbean birds that arrive there seasonally. The landowners were very surprised at the long lists of plant and animal species living on their farms, and how some of these are threatened and endangered, and were proud to be helping to conserve these species.





At the time the management plans were prepared, the owners did not imagine how detailed it needed to be, but after starting the exercise with the foundation, they realized that had already thought about the plan in their heads, even though they had never written it down, and it began to flow: "I want cattle here, my house here, later on I want to build in this sector." They were very clear about their ideas. At the end of the process, the landowners were more willing and committed to conservation. All that was left was to declare their ranches as official reserves.

With the momentum of the official registration of the reserves, Fundación Palmarito continues to work with 24 other potential stakeholders in voluntary conservation in Casanare to begin a new process of creating private nature reserves. Fundación Palmarito has already contributed to the creation of 19 private reserves in the Orinoquia, totaling more than 70,000 hectares. With the support of Fondo Acción, they are currently seeking to establish a Network of Private Protected Areas in the Orinoquia (RAPPO) and create an organization dedicated exclusively to strengthening the network and developing green businesses such as ecotourism, sustainable use of native animals and plants, and directing mandatory and voluntary environmental offsets.



Area

85,199 ha

Location
Urrao (Antioquia)

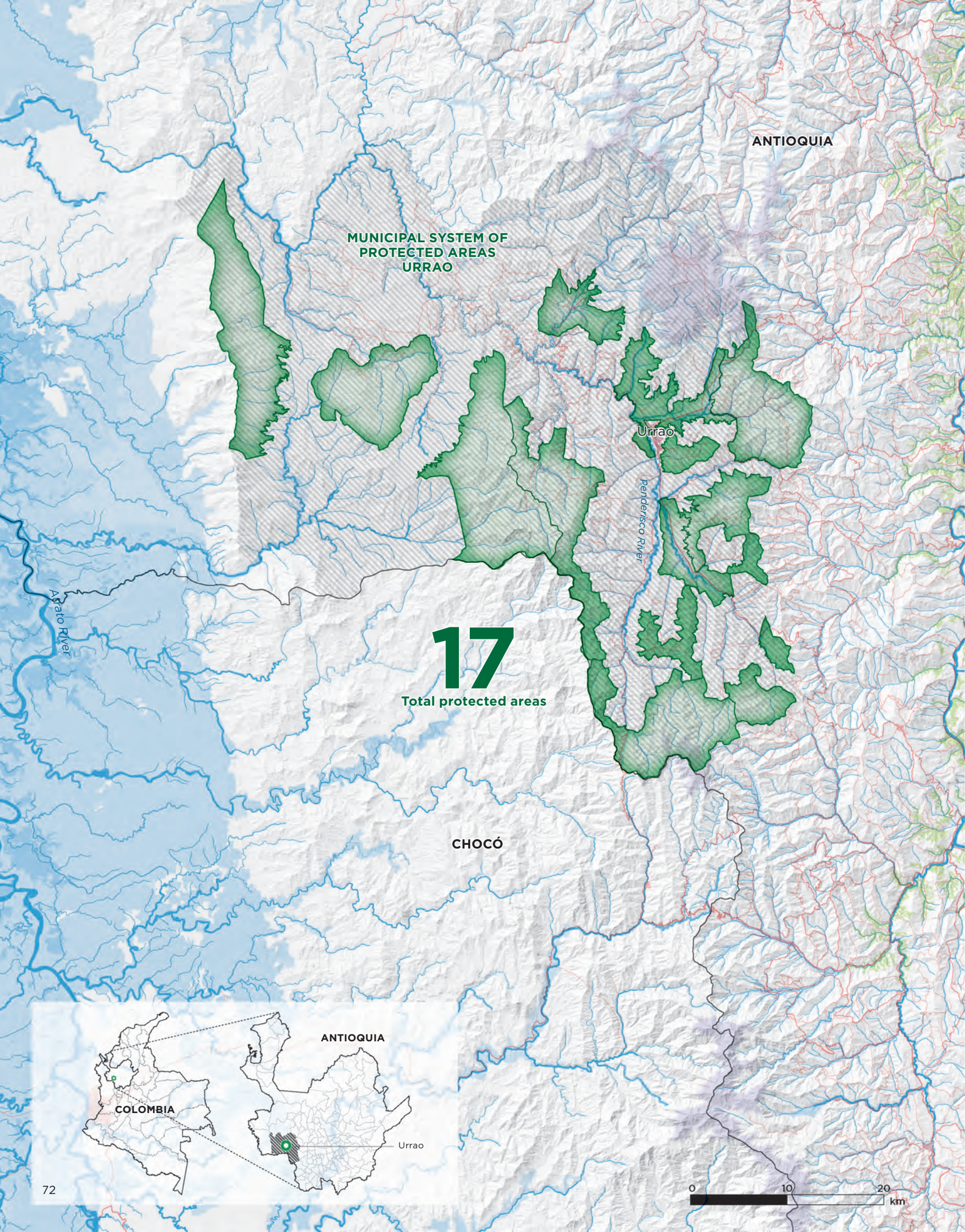
Lead Organization
Fundación Grupo HTM (Habitat - Territory - Environment)

MUNICIPAL SYSTEM OF PROTECTED AREAS

URRAO



On a Sunday in Urrao's main square, it is possible to see this municipality's diversity. People come from cold and termperate climates, farmers and ranchers, the presidents of the community action boards and aqueduct boards of the 117 villages, from 5 irrigation districts, loggers, and muleteers. In the park you might find a stand for the Mayor's Office, the environmental authorities, or the Orquídeas National Park and environmental groups. Also arriving from the lowlands, after a two-day journey on foot or by mule, are the Emberá-Katío indigenous people and community representatives from Afro-Colombian communities with their families. These and many other people and entities in the municipality have some kind of relationship with the use and conservation of forests, the paramo, and water.


ANTIOQUIA
MUNICIPAL SYSTEM OF PROTECTED AREAS URRAO
Urrao
Penderisco River
Atrato River
17
Total protected areas
CHOCÓ
ANTIOQUIA
COLOMBIA
Urrao
0
10
20
km

HOW CAN WE CONSERVE BIODIVERSITY IN LARGE TERRITORIES WITH VERY DIFFERENT PEOPLE, MANY ECOSYSTEMS, AND CAPACITY AND BUDGET CONSTRAINTS?





On a Sunday in Urrao's main square, it is possible to see this municipality's diversity. People come from cold and termperate climates, farmers and ranchers, the presidents of the community action boards and aqueduct boards of the 117 villages, from 5 irrigation districts, loggers, and muleteers. In the park you might find a stand for the Mayor's Office, the environmental authorities, or the Orquídeas National Park and environmental groups. Also arriving from the lowlands, after a two-day journey on foot or by mule, are the Emberá-Katío indigenous people and community representatives from Afro-Colombian communities with their families. These and many other people and entities in the municipality have some kind of relationship with the use and conservation of forests, the paramo, and water.

In 2013, Grupo HTM (civil society) and the municipal administration of Urrao, with the support of Fondo Acción as part of the Conserva Colombia initiative, took on the challenge of designing and structuring a Municipal System of Protected Areas with everyone's participation. Discussions addressed the following questions: What, where, with whom, and how can we implement conservation efforts in Urrao? Discussions and field tours showed the priority areas for conservation, the conservation objectives and values, the people and groups of interest for the Municipal System of Protected Areas, as well as the tools and funding required for the system.

A key step in this participatory process was the area prioritization workshop. At that time, it became clear that for the people living in the mountains of the municipality, the main environmental concern is the need for a clean and permanent water source. The presidents of the community action boards, the aqueducts, and irrigation districts located the village aqueducts and watershed divides on maps as the sites that needed to be converted into conservation areas. It was important to realize that the villages on both sides needed to join forces. On the other hand, those who came from the lowlands pointed out that what was important to them was to protect the rivers from mining, and in particular certain areas because due to high fish productivity or optimal agricultural sites. The different local visions on what is important to conserve, added to the scarce municipal governance in most of the territory, were challenges that the future SIMAP began to discern.

The permanent participation of local authorities, the mayor's office, the autonomous corporation, and the municipal council was fundamental. Public entities' efforts to attend to and support popular conservation decisions were great, despite their budgetary limitations. There are certain roles and tasks that only the municipal mayor's office and the CAR should assume due to their competences in municipal, territorial, and environmental planning, within Urrao's SIMAP management committee. The municipal council adopted the SIMAP on March 17, 2015. The challenge today is to implement all the commitments agreed on with the system.

SIMAP's technical support unified and analyzed the municipality's environmental information that is normally dispersed in different agencies of the municipality and the region. This valuable information has proven to be very useful for many of the municipality's inhabitants. For example, biophysical information is a key input for the municipal land use plan. Information on mining titles in Urrao was successfully used by citizens in a mining rejection movement in mid-2016.



Area

7,932 ha

Location
Carolina del Príncipe (Antioquia)

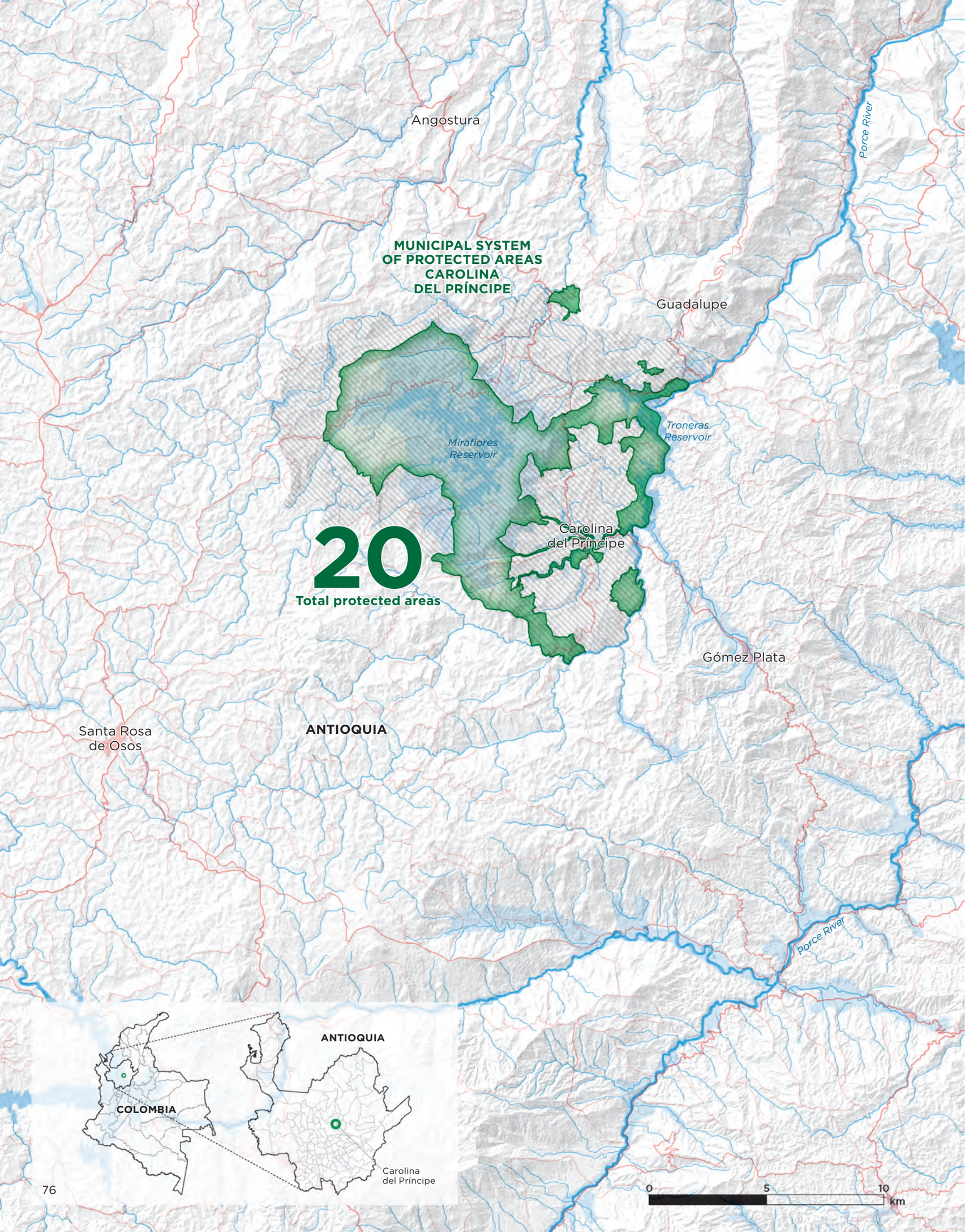
Lead Organization
Fundación Grupo HTM (Habitat - Territory - Environment)

MUNICIPAL SYSTEM OF PROTECTED AREAS

CAROLINA DEL PRÍNCIPE



A corridor for the puma, municipal lands to protect water sources for water supply, sites with natural and archeological value, and civil society reserves are some of the areas that are part of Carolina's Municipal System of Protected Areas (SIMAP).


Angostura
Porce River
MUNICIPAL SYSTEM
OF PROTECTED AREAS
CAROLINA
DEL PRÍNCIPE
Guadalupe
Troneras
Reservoir
Miraflores
Reservoir
20
Total protected areas
Carolina
del Príncipe
Gómez Plata
Santa Rosa
de Osos
ANTIOQUIA
Porce River
ANTIOQUIA
COLOMBIA
Carolina
del Príncipe
0
5
10
km

MAYOR'S OFFICE AND ITS AGRO-ENVIRONMENTAL AND TOURISM SECRETARIAT PROMOTING MUNICIPAL CONSERVATION

A corridor for the puma, municipal lands to protect water sources for water supply, sites with natural and archeological value, and civil society reserves are some of the areas that are part of Carolina's Municipal System of Protected Areas (SIMAP).

It all began when the members of the Carolina Environmental Roundtable, alerted by the possible arrival of mining companies to the municipality, thought it was urgent to conduct studies that would allow them to raise awareness and support actions to conserve the municipality's biodiversity. This concern led two officials from Carolina del Príncipe's Agro-Environmental and Tourism Secretariat to seek partnerships such as Grupo HTM (civil society) and Corantioquia (environmental authority) to present themselves to Conserva Colombia's call for proposals. At the same time as this initiative, livestock transformation projects were being managed, with the conviction of seeking alternatives where conservation and production were complementary.

With the SIMAP project in 2013, the Agro-Environmental Secretariat continued its leadership in an effort to find strategies to get closer to the communities. These efforts included integrating young people in the design of the Carolina del Príncipe SIMAP logo, involving large productive sectors, such as EPM and cattle ranchers, and the local authorities (the mayor's office and the municipal council).

Challenges were not long in coming and the project was met with skepticism from the Carolina City Council and the mayor about the real use of SIMAP. There was also resistance from a livestock sector, opposed to what they perceived as conservation.

"How is a system of protected areas good for the municipality?" was the question to be answered in the first meetings with the mayor and the full municipal council. The SIMAP was explained in detail, but instead of talking only about the representativeness of the ecosystems, of water source protection, and the protection of animal and plant species, it was emphasized that, legally, the municipality must define the main ecological structure in its Land management Plan (POT). This discussion showed the mayor and council members that SIMAP can be their best ally to fulfill this obligation and that it also provides tools for all their territorial management. With this clarity and a constant invitation to participate in the workshops, support for the project grew and there was full backing for its formal adoption.

"Stop demonizing cattle ranchers in conservation" was another challenge taken on in the project. Cattle ranchers in Carolina are a complex group and at the same time one of the most important for the project. Following the Agro-Environmental Secretariat's advice, 60 cattle ranchers were invited to a "Sustainable Livestock Forum" in which FEDEGAN, CIPAV, and FINAGRO participated with informative talks on successful experiences, and the mayor's office also provided information on its projects: Dairy School, Environmental Certification of Fish Farms, and a silvopastoral project. This was the first step, which a few months later was reinforced with the invitation of 11 cattle ranchers to the experience exchange tour.

On the bus to Toro (Valle del Cauca), were 16 key people from Carolina del Príncipe: authorities, cattle ranchers, community action boards, and environmental groups. Some of them had never left Antioquia. In Toro, a municipality with its SIMAP in place since 2010, they exchanged experiences for the development of competencies and capacities for the management of the systems. In Salento (Quindío), two livestock farms with silvopastoral systems were visited to learn about the experience of integrating livestock production with conservation through sustainable systems. The tour had a positive effect on the attendees, who were very motivated and began to believe in the real possibilities of conservation and sustainable production through SIMAP.

On Thursday, September 4, 2014, the city council adopted the agreement that gave way to the conformation and adoption of the Municipal System of Protected Areas (SIMAP) in Carolina del Príncipe. The municipal council, together with the administration and the community, worked to achieve the SIMAP. It is the first SIMAP example for the northern high plains region of Antioquia, and by the end of the project, there were already mayors and neighboring municipalities "eager" to start the process. The challenges ahead are to maintain and strengthen the capacity and social and inter-institutional management with Corantioquia and EPM to conserve Carolina del Príncipe's protected areas.



Area

10,840 ha

Location
Toro, La Unión, and Roldanillo
(Valle del Cauca)

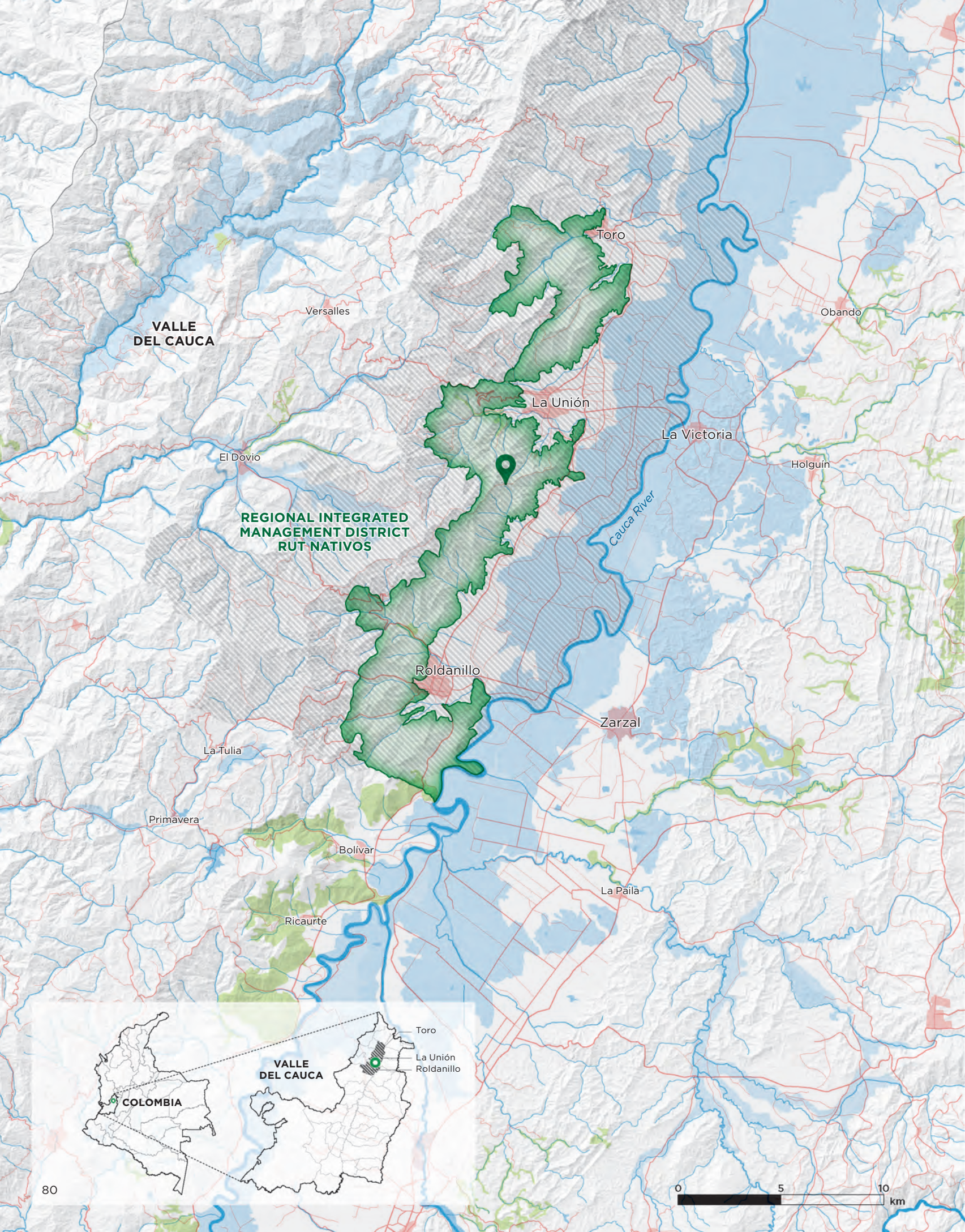
Lead Organization
Fundación Trópico

REGIONAL INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

RUT NATIVOS



Growing up in “La Seca,” as the inhabitants call Santa Rita, has been marked by the extreme lack of water. Santa Rita is a township in the municipality of Roldanillo. Marta Suárez says that she never bathed while she was growing up—”just a little sponge bath.” They survived on water for three hours a week, which they used only for food. Marta says, “In the midst of water scarcity, my generation and many others survived thanks to the trickles of water that came down from the dry forest, because there are water springs there.” The inhabitants of Santa Rita have had a close relationship with the dry forest. Generations of people survived from the use of the forest by selling lumber and coal. Santa Rita itself is built with its fine timber from the dry forest, especially Bálsamo de Tolú. Other factors that have diminished the forest and shrublands are the pressure from cattle ranching and sugarcane cultivation, which is increasingly seeking higher areas. “When we found out that these areas were going to be declared protected areas, I really couldn’t believe it,” adds Marta. “As an inhabitant who has suffered here, I am extremely grateful!” Today, Marta Suárez is an active member of the co-management committee of the RUT NATIVOS protected area.


VALLE
DEL CAUCA
Versalles
Toro
Obando
La Unión
La Victoria
El Dovio
Holguín
REGIONAL INTEGRATED
MANAGEMENT DISTRICT
RUT NATIVOS
Cauca River
Roldanillo
Zarzal
La Tulia
Primavera
Bolívar
La Paila
Ricaurte
COLOMBIA
VALLE
DEL CAUCA
Toro
La Unión
Roldanillo
0
5
10
km

A COMMUNITY THAT KNOWS AND VALUES WHAT IT HAS IS WILLING TO FIGHT FOR IT BY GUARANTEEING THE CONTINUITY OF THE PROTECTED AREA ONCE IT HAS BEEN DECLARED.

Growing up in "La Seca," as the inhabitants call Santa Rita, has been marked by the extreme lack of water. Santa Rita is a township in the municipality of Roldanillo. Marta Suárez says that she never bathed while she was growing up—"just a little sponge bath." They survived on water for three hours a week, which they used only for food. Marta says, "In the midst of water scarcity, my generation and many others survived thanks to the trickles of water that came down from the dry forest, because there are water springs there." The inhabitants of Santa Rita have had a close relationship with the dry forest. Generations of people survived from the use of the forest by selling lumber and coal. Santa Rita itself is built with its fine timber from the dry forest, especially Bálsamo de Tolú. Other factors that have diminished the forest and shrublands are the pressure from cattle ranching and sugarcane cultivation, which is increasingly seeking higher areas. "When we found out that these areas were going to be declared protected areas, I really couldn't believe it," adds Marta. "As an inhabitant who has suffered here, I am extremely grateful!" Today, Marta Suárez is an active member of the co-management committee of the RUT NATIVOS protected area.

The impetus for the creation of RUT NATIVOS was provided by the Municipal System of Protected Areas SIMAP of Toro, which, together with the neighboring municipalities of Roldanillo and La Unión, promoted the idea of declaring a protected area in a dry ecosystem area prioritized by the environmental authority in Valle del Cauca (the CVC) including the three municipalities. Roldanillo and La Unión welcomed the proposal with interest and in partnership with Fundación Trópico and the CVC, the National Park Service, and the Asocaña Water Fund, as part of the Conserva Colombia initiative. The process of declaring the protected area began in 2014.

It was clear to Fundación Trópico that in order to have a successful conservation process, a local community needs to be encouraged to take ownership of the protected area and be a leader. The project's social support team was willing to do anything: it held more than 90 workshops and community meetings in all the villages of the municipalities. It was not easy at first because the forest and dry shrublands are poorly understood ecosystems and sometimes despised as "chamizales" or "charrascales." In the first meetings, the people in the villages chose 35 delegates, with whom the project carried out a training process. They organized a contest for the name of the protected area, which was finally called "RUT NATIVOS." RUT means: Roldanillo, La Unión, Toro, and NATIVOS means: Nature, Environmentalism, Territory, Identity, Vision, Organization, and Solidarity.

The participants from the three municipalities had never sat together before, but after the training retreats, a sense of family had started to grow among them, which in the long run also served to reinforce their belonging to the territory and their confidence in being able to count on each other. The most important and exciting part of this training is that the participants recognized each other as human beings who had the same desire to have a good life, to help each other, to have water, to love their territory and want to take care of it, and that the social network is built among everyone. From these 35 delegates came the community representatives who are key to the protected area's management and make up the co-management committee.

Among RUT NATIVOS' achievements, people highlight the fact that it has been included in the local agendas of the three municipalities. The institutional processes are slow, but people are very attentive and the community component of the co-management committee is very active. For example, they created a micro-fund in which each committee member makes a small monthly contribution for travel expenses, and they were able to get the three municipal development plans to take action on the management plan. The AP is also already in the CVC's action plan, they are starting with the nature tourism plan and doing some forest restoration. Recently, the RUT NATIVOS co-management committee and the municipal administrations of La Unión and Roldanillo won a fight with ETB, preventing an electrical transmission line from passing through the middle of the protected area.



Andean Rainforest

Area

851 ha

Location
El Cerrito (Valle del Cauca)

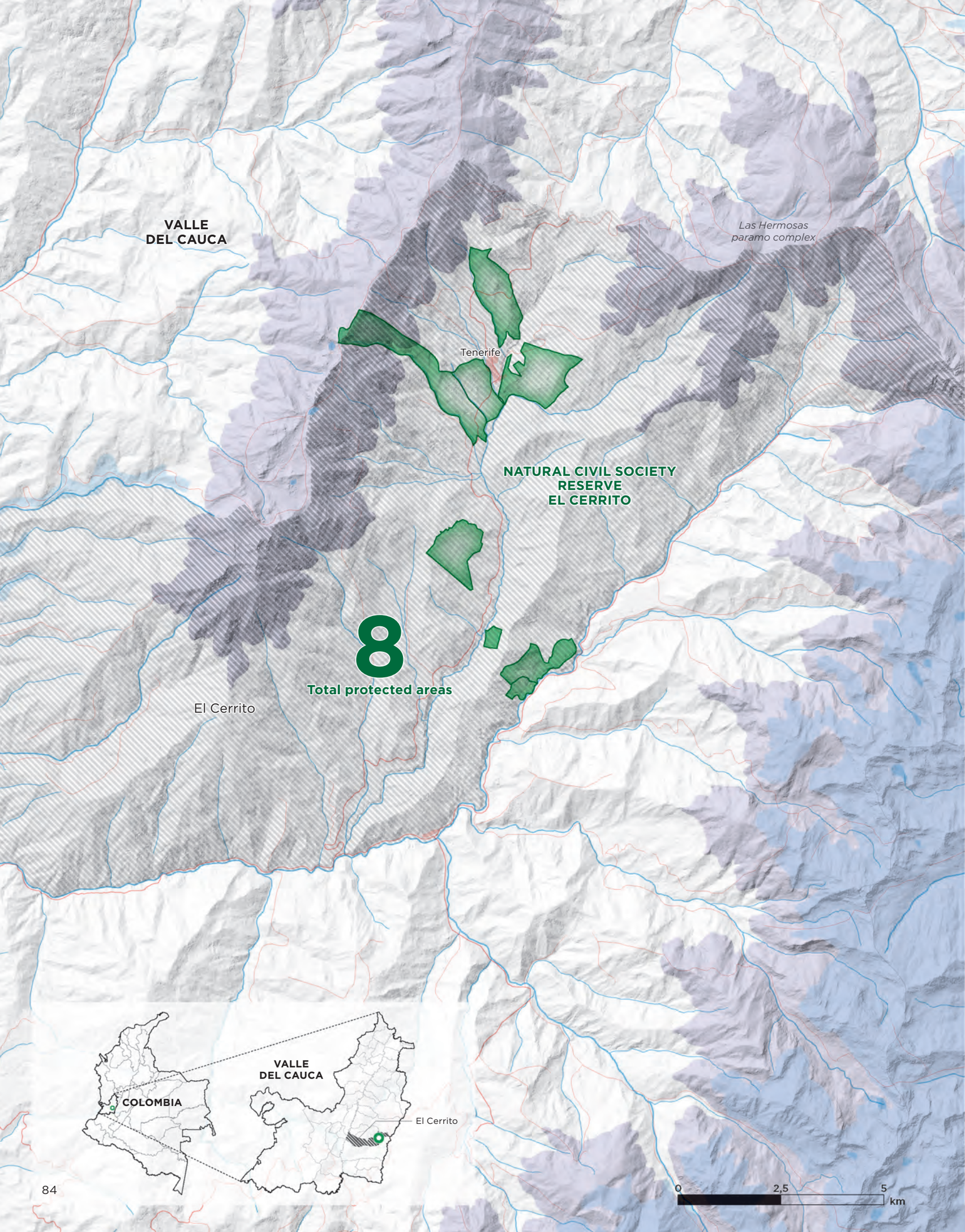
Lead Organization
Fundación Ambiente Colombia

NATURAL CIVIL SOCIETY RESERVE

EL CERRITO



The dry mountain forest enclave of the Amaime River can be reached by road leaving the municipality of El Cerrito, Valle del Cauca, and then climbing up to the edge of the Amaime River through the Cordillera Central. It is a landscape of mountain forest adapted to dry conditions, with patches of wax palm forest. At its highest point, it is surrounded by paramos: Las Hermosas National Park, the Valle Bonito paramo, and finally the Las Domínguez paramo at the top of a "mountain island" attached to the Cordillera Central. For the municipality of El Cerrito, this basin is one of the main sources of water that supplies its urban and rural areas for agricultural and livestock use.


VALLE
DEL CAUCA
Las Hermosas
paramo complex
Tenerife
NATURAL CIVIL SOCIETY
RESERVE
EL CERRITO
8
Total protected areas
El Cerrito
COLOMBIA
VALLE
DEL CAUCA
El Cerrito
0
2,5
5
km

FARM OWNERS DISPEL THEIR FEAR OF LOSING THEIR LAND AND CONNECT LANDSCAPES BY MANAGING THEIR FARMS.



The dry mountain forest enclave of the Amaime River can be reached by road leaving the municipality of El Cerrito, Valle del Cauca, and then climbing up to the edge of the Amaime River through the Cordillera Central. It is a landscape of mountain forest adapted to dry conditions, with patches of wax palm forest. At its highest point, it is surrounded by paramos: Las Hermosas National Park, the Valle Bonito paramo, and finally the Las Domínguez paramo at the top of a "mountain island" attached to the Cordillera Central. For the municipality of El Cerrito, this basin is one of the main sources of water that supplies its urban and rural areas for agricultural and livestock use.

In the upper part of the Amaime River basin, the Conserva Colombia initiative headed by Fundación Ambiente Colombia contributed to the creation of eight Natural Civil Society Reserves (RNSC). The farms that are now reserves are mainly dedicated to extensive dairy farming combined with intensive production of onions, cabbage, and cilantro. Some of them still have some paramo and fragments of the aforementioned native forests. Many landowners were already protecting water sources and forests, but they did not know what they were protecting or what it would mean for them to continue their production in more environmentally sustainable ways in order to reduce the pressure on the forests and paramos on their farms.

Fundación Ambiente Colombia has been working in the Amaime river basin for 10 years and has been supporting the process of registering private reserves with the environmental authorities and the National Park Service since 2012. With the Conserva Colombia call for proposals, the foundation sought to reinforce its previous work of establishing conservation corridors through RNSC, with the idea of connecting isolated areas of native vegetation in the landscape using the forest fragments present in many of the farms in the basin. In 2013, the process of formalizing conservation agreements, carrying out biological studies, maps, management plans, and finally registering the private reserves with the National Park Service began.

Landowners were distrusting during the first few meetings, fearing they would lose their lands because they would be forced to sell them as soon as they were declared reserves. For them, conservation was associated with national parks and not with natural civil society reserves. These reservations disappeared when a former mayor of Cerrito and landowner in the area encouraged them by classifying his own farm as a conservation reserve and explained the regulations applicable to private reserves. They also visited other private reserves that maintain dairy production and conservation. The landowners had the opportunity to exchange experiences and talk about their concerns with other cattle ranchers. They saw that Bolívar, with few resources, had been able to move towards a common goal. Upon their return to Cerrito, the farm owners were already convinced that it is possible to conserve and produce.

The biggest lesson from the project is the value of building community among landowners. Some of them did not even know each other, and began to meet to discuss common issues, to help each other in times of need, and to form a social network, which is key for the conservation project to remain strong and dynamic. Some landowners have promoted nature tourism, while others adopt agroforestry practices and protect water sources. There are more landowners in the basin who are also interested in turning their farms into nature reserves. The Mayor's Office of Cerrito, the environmental authority (CVC), and Las Hermosas National Park are very committed to supporting the management plans for the reserves. The next step is to increase support for alternative livestock production systems and to continue strengthening communities to maintain their commitment to water and ecosystem protection, as well as to create new initiatives.



Area

143 ha

Location
Cali (Valle del Cauca)

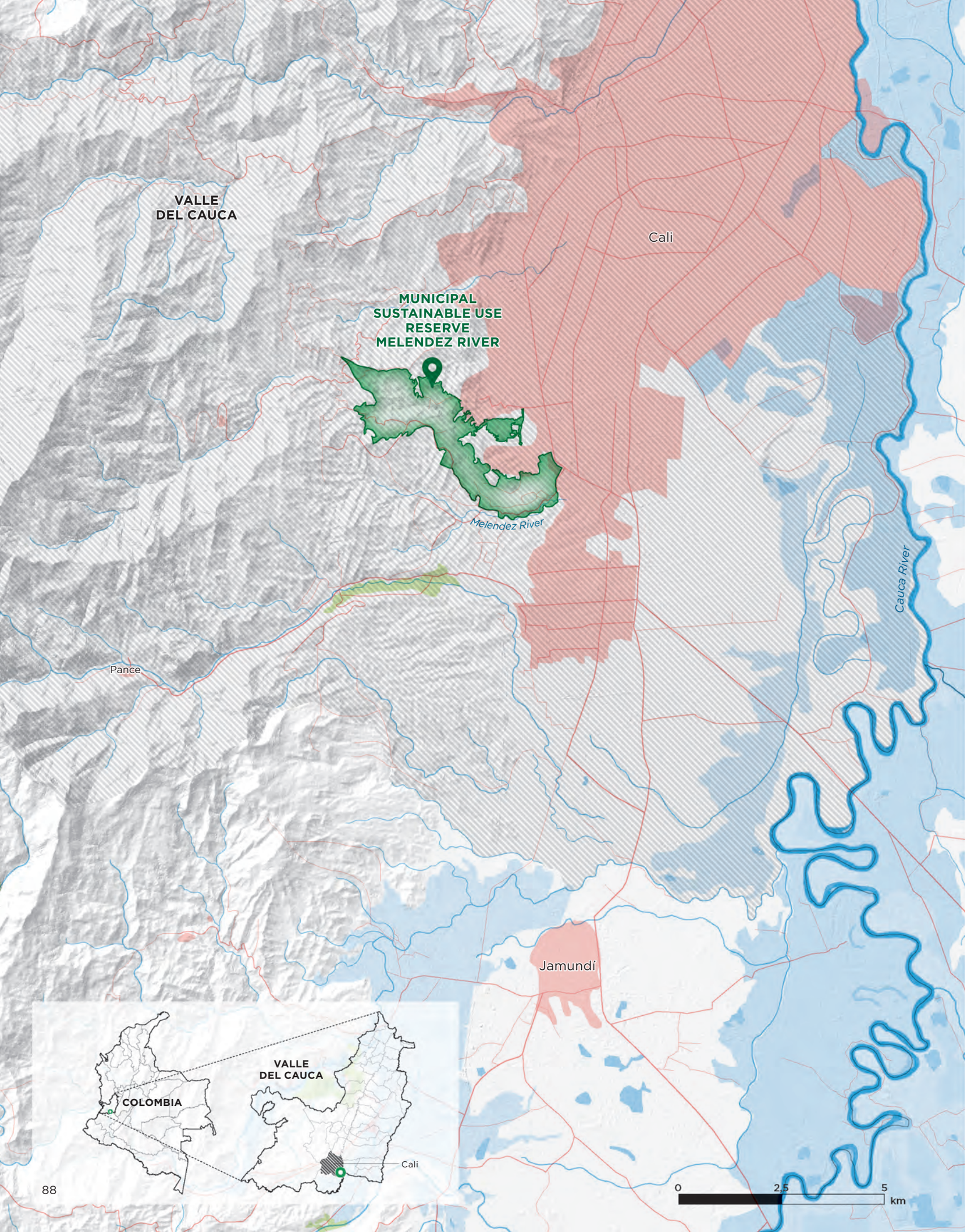
Lead Organization
Fundación Danza y Vida

MUNICIPAL SUSTAINABLE USE RESERVE

MELÉNDEZ RIVER



The Meléndez River is one of the six rivers that cross the city of Cali, and in the 1990s, its lower basin—at the height of the Meléndez neighborhood—was a very popular salsa spot. Before the project to declared this a protected area, several rural communities of La Buitrera and the Meléndez neighborhood in Cali had already initiated independent actions for the river's conservation since 2006. Finally, in 2011, a ruling in favor of the community ordered the municipality of Cali to ensure the conservation of the basin. Pollution problems associated with coal mining, sewage from squatter settlements, and the accumulation of garbage, as well as the urbanization of the river banks and reserve areas, required urgent intervention. In 2013, with the intention of initiating the conservation of the river, the Cali Environmental Authority (DAGMA) in association with Fundación Danza y Vida and the Corporación Biodiversa won the Conserva Colombia call for proposals to begin the process of declaring it a protected area.


VALLE
DEL CAUCA
Cali
MUNICIPAL
SUSTAINABLE USE
RESERVE
MELENDEZ RIVER
Melendez River
Cauca River
Pance
Jamundí
COLOMBIA
VALLE
DEL CAUCA
Cali
0
2,5
5
km

AGREEMENTS IN THE MIDST OF DIFFERENCES: A POSSIBLE PATH TO WATER BASIN PROTECTION

The Meléndez River is one of the six rivers that cross the city of Cali, and in the 1990s, its lower basin—at the height of the Meléndez neighborhood—was a very popular salsa spot. Before the project to declared this a protected area, several rural communities of La Buitrera and the Meléndez neighborhood in Cali had already initiated independent actions for the river's conservation since 2006. Finally, in 2011, a ruling in favor of the community ordered the municipality of Cali to ensure the conservation of the basin. Pollution problems associated with coal mining, sewage from squatter settlements, and the accumulation of garbage, as well as the urbanization of the river banks and reserve areas, required urgent intervention. In 2013, with the intention of initiating the conservation of the river, the Cali Environmental Authority (DAGMA) in association with Fundación Danza y Vida and the Corporación Biodiversa won the Conserva Colombia call for proposals to begin the process of declaring it a protected area.

In 2013, when the project began, it became clear that it was critical to bring the isolated efforts of the rural and urban communities into a united front. The strategy consisted of creating a group of environmental managers chosen by the communities themselves, who accompanied and supported the development of all activities These environmental managers also benefitted from a training plan on regulations and protected areas and accompanied the work of the biologists as co-investigators. The project also created a local roundtable for the management of the declaration, made up of representatives of all those involved in the basin: the Cali Country Club, the Pichincha Military Canton, the environmental committees, community organizations, as well as the municipal environmental authorities (DAGMA and CVC). Despite these efforts, there were tangible differences and conflicts between leaders, community organizations, the popular sector and the private sector, and with the environmental authorities, which constituted a major challenge for the progress of the declaration project.

The key to making the transition to working together was to connect the participants as individuals with common interests. Fundación Danza y Vida achieved this connection through



an experience and reflection in the dark and humid environment of a temazcal (a word in the Nahautl language for a house where people sweat) where participants were able to "cleanse and calm the spirits." The attendees remember it to this day. From then on, they were able to work together despite their differences. They reached agreements on the management plan and worked together on several fronts that led to the declaration of the "Meléndez River Municipal Sustainable Use Reserve" in 2014.

Even three years later, when there is a meeting of the Protected Area's co-management committee, everyone works together, overcoming different political positions. In the words of Rocío Vargas, leader of the Meléndez neighborhood, "We have had difficulties with leadership and egos between the two communities, but that has not affected the fact that we are part of the co-management committee, and then everything is forgotten. The only objective is the basin, the river, the protected area, and we are all moving in the same direction."

The already-united communities' project was echoed in the "Carnival for Life" as an art and cultural event in which 2,000 people took to the streets and which culminated with the delivery of the declaration document to a delegate of the mayor of Cali. All the leaders of different parties exerted their influence and with the help of citizen pressure, the protected area was included in the city's Land Use Plan (POT).

The Meléndez River Reserve is the first protected area in the country that combines rural and urban space and includes different reserves and authorities. The co-management committee is still very active and although there are still many difficulties and the valorization of the land together with legal and illegal urbanization represent a constant threat, both the community and the environmental entities are aware of the importance of their work and their presence.


conservacolombia


Fondo
Acción


The Nature
Conservancy



Fondo Acción

The Nature Conservancy

