



improving watershed management mexico



The Mexican State of Chiapas hosts 30 percent of the country's fresh water, sustaining the region's impressive array of biodiversity as well as the 4.2 million people who call it home.

Fresh water plays a crucial role in nourishing crops and sustaining species—like the Horned Guan, an endangered bird found only in the upper-elevation cloud forests of Chiapas and Guatemala.

But the region is under threat. The destruction, degradation and fragmentation of forests have led to biodiversity loss and the decline of ecosystems. Excessive rainfall has also caused landslides and floods, affecting many communities in the area.

In 2010, with funding from the Global Environment Facility, Conservation International and its partners (CONANP, CONAGUA, SEMAHN and SECAM) established ECOSECHAS, a watershed management project. ECOSECHAS works with local communities to improve their socio-economic situation and safeguard ecosystems and biodiversity in the Sierra Costa region of Chiapas.

The project has three main components:

- 1 **Research:** By providing monitoring tools, conducting local research and amassing lessons learned, CI and its partners are improving communities' and policymakers' understanding of the connections between land use and ecosystem services.
- 2 **Capacity Building + Coordination:** CI and its partners are building local capacity to incorporate ecosystem services and biodiversity considerations into land use planning and policies. The project provides training on natural resource planning and sustainable farming practices while also developing restoration and soil conservation projects. In addition, ECOSECHAS seeks to improve coordination and communication among municipal, state and federal agencies.
- 3 **Market Development:** By working with local communities to help them access public and private payment-for-ecosystem-services (PES) opportunities, CI and its partners are helping to secure funding and incentives for land use practices that value and protect the watersheds.

Because municipalities finance and manage the watershed committees within their geographic areas, special emphasis is placed on involving mayors who also serve as presidents of watershed committees. These local officials are often receptive to working with CI and its partners because they represent populations vulnerable to floods, landslides and degraded quality of drinking water.

ECOSECHAS has the potential to serve as a model for collaboration among diverse institutions and individuals in order to protect irreplaceable biodiversity and natural resources. This project also gives hope that the people, plants and animals in Chiapas will continue to enjoy the benefits only clean and abundant water can provide.



demonstrating
how **healthy
ecosystems
benefit human
well-being** in
Mexico

human well-being

- provision of water for 4.2 million people
- sustainable agricultural practices
- enhanced livelihoods through payment-for-ecosystem-service (PES) mechanisms.



ecosystem services

- sustained water supply
- soil erosion and flood control



healthy ecosystems

- preventing destructive land use practices
- conducting restoration soil conservation for 18,000 hectares
- 50,000 plant and animal species
- 837,415 hectares under improved watershed management

