



INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES AND LANDOWNERS COOPERATE IN THE CONSERVATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Challenges

The Chiquitano Model Forest is located in one of the last dry tropical forest regions of South America. The region is valued for its unique ecology as well as its historical and cultural importance. Marfil Lake is in the central area of the Amazon Basin, lying between Bolivia and Brazil with 788,300 hectares of its basin on the Bolivian side.

Apart from agriculture and livestock, subsistence fishing and hunting are important activities for the local communities and private landowners in the area of Marfil Lake. Both Bolivian and Brazilian fishermen and hunters from outside the local communities take the resources from the area without any control,



Chiquitano Model Forest, Bolivia

Established: 2005 | Area: 20.4 million ha



Facts

- The Chiquitano Model Forest, in terms of area, is one of the largest Model Forests in the International Model Forest Network.
- Marfil Lake is recognized for its high production of fish and the presence of important fauna, including many endangered species.
- People from 11 farming and indigenous Chiquitano communities and 20 private properties depend on Marfil Lake and its resources.

which they mainly use for commercial purposes. This, together with the problems involved in the changeover from forestry use to stockbreeding, the soil degradation, loss of biodiversity and lower levels of water in the lake all represent a threat to the conservation of resources for the local people. Marfil Lake also plays a very important role in the regulation of the area's water system as well as being a source of water for human consumption.

Finding a solution

In 2008, the indigenous communities and private landowners of the area got together and made plans to deal with this situation. All of the communities from District 11 joined forces to ask the municipal government of San Ignacio de Velasco to organize the sustainable use of the fishing resources while at the same time asking for Marfil Lake to be declared a protected area. Based on the municipality's territorial plan, which was encouraged and facilitated by members of the Chiquitano Model Forest, the municipal government and the communities promoted the creation of an integrated management natural area. In 2010, the Marfil Lake Integrated Management Natural Area (ANMIM) was officially created through a municipal ordinance. This territory covers an area of 10,000 hectares.

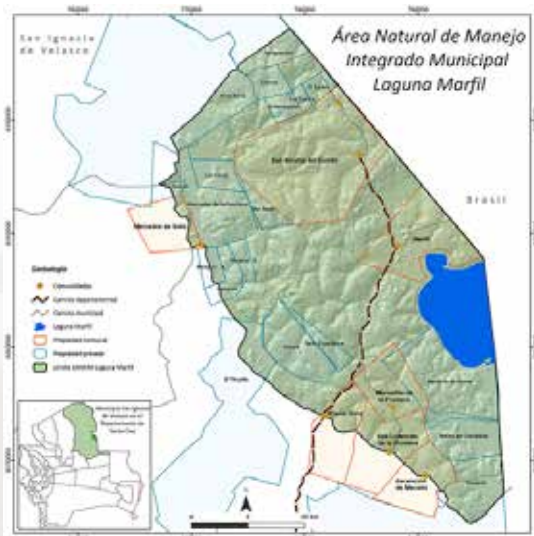
The main objectives of the Marfil Lake ANMIM are:

1. To improve local organization, the ways that natural resources are used, and production systems;
2. To maintain in perpetuity the goods and services provided by the entire hydrobiological system of Marfil Lake;
3. To only allow subsistence fishing and hunting for the local people;
4. To keep the Legal Ecological Easements, such as the strips of vegetation on the sides of rivers, ravines or natural drainage in good condition;
5. To conserve viable populations of flora and fauna species.

Management of the protected area

One of the principles of the Ecosystem Approach is for decisions on the use of territory and natural resources to be in the hands of society. In 2011, the Management Committee of the Marfil Lake ANMIM was established, made up of community representatives, farmers, the municipal government and the Surveillance Committee. The Management Committee represents the local people, takes part in drawing up management and fishing plans for the area and helps to supervise area management.

According to the mayor of San Ignacio de Velasco, Erwin Méndez, the actual people of the area are the best guards you could find. Kenny Middagh, Head of the Municipal Planning Technical Unit of San Ignacio de Velasco, stated that a sign has been put up to demarcate the area in each one of the 11 communities, awareness campaigns were carried out among the local people, and training courses offered in the conservation of protected areas, all of which has awakened an interest in caring for the Lake. The mayor added that “Since the Management Committee has been set up, there has been an improvement in the use of the natural resources, making the ecosystem more sustainable.”



Results and impacts

The protected area of over 70,000 hectares was created thanks to local initiatives backed by the political support of a municipal government with cross-border features, and because it safeguards a significant portion of the Chiquitano forest, Cerrado and the aquatic ecosystems typical of the region.

“Today, the communities exercise better control over the resources that come from the lake”, says Antonio Suárez, Chairman of the Marfil Lake ANMIM Management Committee. “It is the local people who look after the bay, and some 1,100 people benefit from the management area as a whole. The level of awareness among people in the municipality has risen, thanks to the support of the Model Forest”, according to Mr. Middagh. Moreover, the Model Forest idea was one of the conceptual bases behind the design and implementation of regional conservation and forestry development activities in the ecoregion of the Dry Chiquitano Forest.

The area is gradually attracting tourists from the region of Santa Cruz, the provincial capital. Several members of the community have developed an interest in encouraging local development by providing food and accommodation to visitors. “We were thinking of training people, training the women who are selling things and building some hostels here in the community,” says Don Antonio.

To find out more

- Video: youtu.be/omiULOPHLOk
- www.bmchiquitano.com/?page_id=6&idp=1220

The International Model Forest Network brings people together to test and apply innovative approaches to the sustainable management and use of the world's landscapes and natural resources.

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This document has been published with the support of the Government of Canada

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