IUCN Conservation Outlook Assessment 2017 **(archived)**
Finalised on 10 November 2017

Please note: this is an archived Conservation Outlook Assessment for Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve. To access the most up-to-date Conservation Outlook Assessment for this site, please visit https://www.worldheritageoutlook.iucn.org.

Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve

SITE INFORMATION

Country:
Honduras
Inscribed in: 1982
Criteria:
(vii) (viii) (ix) (x)

Site description:
Located on the watershed of the Río Plátano, the reserve is one of the few remains of a tropical rainforest in Central America and has an abundant and varied plant and wildlife. In its mountainous landscape sloping down to the Caribbean coast, over 2,000 indigenous people have preserved their traditional way of life. © UNESCO

SUMMARY

2017 Conservation Outlook

Critical

Th conservation outlook for the property remains critical in line with the longstanding inscription of the World Heritage List in Danger since 1996, temporarily interrupted between 2007 and 2011. While the Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve and numerous contiguous protected area in both Honduras and neighboring Nicaragua continue to harbor one of the largest and most important forest blocks of Mesomerica, adequately named the "Heart of the Corridor", the governance and management of the property remains severely constrained. In line with requests and recommendations from the World Heritage Committee, a fundamental re-visiting of the very approach and spatial configuration is in order. As inscribed 35 years ago the property has no more legal foundation since the overlapping biosphere reserve was substantially enlarged and re-zoned in 1997. There is a need to harmonize the biosphere reserve as legally recognized and managed today with a revised World Heritage approach, benefitting from the promising efforts to accommodate local and indigenous rights and needs under the biosphere reserve umbrella. Namely, the zonation recognizing the economic reality and cultural diversity of the Mosquitia and the ongoing negotiation of access rights to natural resources and duties should be applied to the World Heritage approach. It is clear that the overall security situation is to improve to permit significant improvements of the governance and management of the property. The efforts guiding the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger provide an adequate framework to integrate the lessons learned in 35 years of the existence of the property.

Current state and trend of VALUES

Critical
Trend: Improving

Over the 35 years since inscription, the property has been subject to increasing pressures resulting in loss and degradation of forests through the advancing

agricultural frontier and uncontrolled extraction of natural resources. This trend has been resulting in the inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger since 1996, briefly interrupted between 2007 and 2011. Parts of the property have lost important conservation values whereas vast adjacent areas outside of the property are widely assumed to be much more intact than the degraded areas of the property as formally inscribed. In addition to consolidating the governmental overall presence and stepping up the participatory management, this raises the fundamental question of the adequacy of the boundaries of the property. A reconfiguration of the boundaries, accepting irreversible degradation in some areas while assessing the feasibility of adding areas of possibly highest conservation value elsewhere, might be the only possibility to move ahead in the current situation.

Overall THREATS

Very High Threat

As recognized in a Presidential Decree dated 2011, the limited governmental presence constitutes a significant overarching threat. The situation is aggravated by drug trafficking, which directly impacts on the property in the form of cattle ranching, widely believed to serve as money laundering. The agricultural frontier, illegal logging, poaching and trade in biodiversity products all impact on the integrity of the property and its surroundings. A planned series of large dams, apparently approved by the government in the absence of adequate impact assessments, cast further shadows on the future of the still largely intact Honduran Mosquitia. Without significant efforts to re-gain governmental control, illegal activities impacting on the natural values of the property are unlikely to decrease. The inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger provides a platform to draw attention to the situation and to develop a systematic management response.

Overall PROTECTION and MANAGEMENT

Serious Concern

A illustrated by the ongoing inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger, the overall protection and management of Río Plátano raises serious concerns. Insecurity, lawlessness and impunity continue to compromise all conservation efforts. While the State Party is actively working on a management response in line with requests and recommendations from the

World Heritage Committee, much remains to be done. ICF, the institution in charge of protected area management should be equipped with all resources needed while recognizing that the challenges at hand go well beyond the scope of protected area management.

FULL ASSESSMENT

Description of values

Values

World Heritage values

- **Exceptionally beautiful landscape comprised of large, undisturbed expanses of tropical forests, savannahs, wetlands, and beaches**
  Criterion:(vii)

  The property contains large expanses of closed tropical forests, savannah, wetlands, and beaches as well as numerous rivers and waterfalls. These are complemented by rugged granite mountains with impressive rock formations that produce spectacular waterfalls, and numerous rivers with scenic stretches of white water and deep, forested gorges (UNEP-WCMC, 2011).

- **On-going geological processes**
  Criterion:(viii)

  The property’s steep mountains, flat to undulating coastal plain, lagoons, and shallow marine habitats are outstanding examples of the broad range of physiographic and geomorphological features of the Caribbean coast of Central America. The on-going geological processes are visibly expressed here, especially along the dynamic coastline, the ever-changing meanders of the rivers as they hit the coastal plain, and the shifting patterns of wetlands (UNEP-WCMC, 2011).

- **Key site for the on-going evolution of ecological and biological processes for the full range of Caribbean coastal terrestrial, fresh water, marine ecosystems**
  Criterion:(ix)

The Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve is the largest protected area and forest block in Honduras, and one of the largest in all of Central America. Its size, high degree of naturalness and contiguity with other areas of high conservation significance make it one of the last places in the sub-region where ecological and biological processes continue to evolve at a relatively large scale. Rather than an isolated fragment, the property is an integral and ecologically connected element of a much larger, relatively undisturbed natural landscape with a complex mosaic of habitats (UNEP-WCMC, 2011; Jaeger et al., 2011; AFE/COHDEFOR, 2007; IUCN, 1982).

► Exceptional diversity of ecosystems, habitats and species

Criteria:(ix)(x)

An impressive range of distinct terrestrial and coastal-marine ecosystems provide provide for an exceptionally diverse array of habitats and species in the property an its surroundings, including into neighboring Nicaragua. The major ecological zones are wetlands, pine savannah, broadleaf forest, highland pine forest and the near-shore marine zone. At a finer resolution, at least 25 terrestrial, riverine, coastal and marine ecosystems have been distinguished (UNEP-WCMC, 2011). At the species level, the property stands out by boasting very high percentages of the Honduran and Central American fauna. This includes some 70% of the fish, and around 57% of both the birds and the reptiles of Honduras (UNEP-WCMC, 2011). As many as 39 mammal species, 377 bird species and some 200 reptiles and amphibians have been recorded, along with over 2,000 species of vascular plants. Charismatic or otherwise noteworthy species include, for example: 5 species of felines, the vulnerable giant anteater (Myrmecophaga tridactyla), the likewise vulnerable West Indian manatee (Trichechus manatus), and the spectacled caiman (Caiman crocodilus, LC). Spectacular bird species include the elusive harpy eagle (Harpia harpyja, NT), great green macaw (Ara ambiguus, EN), military macaw (Ara militaris, VU) and king vulture (Sarcoramphus papa, LC). Noteworthy reptiles include green turtle (Chelonia mydas, EN), loggerhead turtle (Caretta caretta, VU) and leatherback turtle (Dermochelys coriacea, VU). The property is also renowned for the in-situ conservation of the germplasm of valuable timber and medicinal plant species (UNEP-WCMC, 2011; AFE/COHDEFOR, 2007; IUCN, 1982).

Assessment information

Threats

Current Threats

Very High Threat

Lawlessness, insecurity and impunity in the region constitute significant overarching threats. The situation is aggravated by drug trafficking, which directly impacts on the property in the form of cattle ranching, widely believed to serve as money laundering. Without significant efforts to re-gain governmental control, illegal activities impacting on the natural values of the property are unlikely to decrease.

▶ **Hunting (commercial/subsistence), Poaching, Logging/ Wood Harvesting, Fishing / Harvesting Aquatic Resources**

Very High Threat
Inside site, widespread(15-50%)
Outside site

Uncontrolled resource use for subsistence and commercial purposes is widespread and includes illegal logging, poaching, fishing and trade in wildlife and plants (Jaeger et al., 2011; Global Witness, 2009; Ohnesorge et al., 2006). At the same time, indigenous peoples and local communities depend on the local natural resources so it is neither realistic nor desirable to exclude use from the entire property. It is important to note that there are major and ongoing efforts to grant defined use rights to indigenous peoples and local communities under the umbrella of the biosphere reserve, as legally defined since 1997. The inconsistent boundaries between the legal biosphere reserve and the World Heritage property as inscribed in 1982 are unhelpful in the ongoing negotiation between governmental conservation and local resource use.

► Invasive Non-Native/ Alien Species

Low Threat
Inside site, extent of threat not known
Outside site

Introduced into the coastal lagoons, tilapia fish is now common and assumed to compete with native fish (AFE/COHDEFOR, 2007). While the current status is not known, the increasing cattle ranching is typically associated with the introduction of exotic grass species, which is likely to be or become an issue in the property as it is across many of the sub-region's protected areas (Jaeger et al., 2011).

► Erosion and Siltation/ Deposition

Data Deficient
Inside site, extent of threat not known
Outside site

As a result of deforestation there are concerns about erosion and sedimentation. Detailed information seems to be scarce (Jaeger et al., 2011).

► Logging/ Wood Harvesting

Very High Threat
Inside site, widespread(15-50%)
Outside site

There is a long and well-documented history of illegal logging in and around the property targeting precious timber (Jaeger et al., 2001; Global Witness, 2009; Thiel et al., 2008; Ohnesorge et al., 2006). The Presidential Decree in 2011 stated the objective to actively address the challenge with modest success so far. There are, however, promising efforts to promote legal community forest management.

► Changes in traditional ways of life and knowledge systems, Identity/ Social Cohesion/ Changes in local population and community

Data Deficient
Inside site, extent of threat not known
Outside site

While beyond the scope of this assessment, the social and cultural impacts of drug-related violence and insecurity in an area with limited governmental

presence are undoubtedly considerable.

▶ War, Civil Unrest/ Military Exercises

Very High Threat
Inside site, widespread(15-50%)
Outside site

The precarious overall security situation undermines management and law enforcement and poses high threats to protected area staff and other law enforcement institutions, as well as environmental activists. Sadly, Honduras was recently ranked as the most dangerous place for environmentalists worldwide (Global Witness, 2017). Numerous illegal landing strips in and around the property are used for drug trafficking. However, a much deeper drug-related environmental impact is the related illegal land trade (Sesnie et al., 2017). The severe law enforcement deficit also extends to illegal fishing, logging and wildlife trade. The inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger drew attention to the situation and was accompanied by a Presidential Decree assigning national priority to the protection and management of the Rio Plátano Biosphere Reserve. An integrated, inter-institutional action plan has since been developed and is being partially implemented to enhance the rule of law in the region (IUCN, 2014; World Heritage Committee, 2011; Jaeger et al., 2011).

▶ Livestock Farming / Grazing

Very High Threat
Inside site, widespread(15-50%)
Outside site

As elsewhere in many marginalized rural areas of the Mesoamerican sub-region there is a dynamic agricultural frontier in the Honduran Mosquitia. Several factors are driving the conversion of forests. While land speculation and money laundering associated with the drug business play an important role (Sesnie et al., 2017), there is also poverty-driven expansion of agricultural land (Jaeger et al., 2011; Ohnesorge et al., 2006). The property is particularly vulnerable in the easily accessible Northwest, Southwest and West quadrants (Jaeger et al., 2011). It is important to understand that large parts of the area inscribed as a World Heritage property in 1982 are not subject to strict protection according to the current legal framework. Some of these areas have been converted into ranches and agricultural land and

cannot meet basic integrity expectations as understood in a World Heritage context. However, in the core zone of the biosphere reserve – as legally defined since 1997 – there is active law enforcement in response to occasional illegal squatting.

► Renewable Energy

Data Deficient
Outside site

The longstanding and controversial plan to construct a series of hydropower dams on the Patuca River since the 1960s appeared to be abandoned at some stage on the grounds of major environmental and social concerns and protests. However, the plans resurfaced and according to the national media a governmental decision to go ahead with three dams on the Patuca River, facilitated by a cooperation agreement with Sinohydro, was approved by the National Honduran Congress on 17 January 2011 (Jaeger et al., 2011), with the intention to start with the so-called Patuca III project. Apparently, an environmental license was granted in early 2011 for the construction of this dam. The report of the most recent Reactive Monitoring mission notes an absence of adequate impact analysis, suggesting a limited foundation for informed decision-making and mitigation planning (Jaeger et al., 2011). At the time of writing the project seems to be on hold despite some preparatory construction having taken place. Given that the boundaries of the property remain unclear and the absence of adequate impact assessments of the dam and associated access and transmission infrastructure, the exact threat posed to the property cannot be judged.

Potential Threats

Data Deficient

Proposed and in principle approved hydropower development on the Patuca River through a series of large dams would in all likelihood induce fundamental change in the so far remote Honduran Mosquitia, as is well documented from large-scale infrastructure development in remote rural areas. The available information does not permit a more detailed assessment of the apparently started Patuca III dam, let alone the proposed Patuca I and II dams.

► Renewable Energy, Roads/ Railroads, Utility / Service Lines

Data Deficient
Outside site

While the current status of the three proposed and apparently approved dams on the Patuca River remains unclear, none of the projects has been cancelled. All projects would inevitably impact on the intactness of the region. Whereas the exact impacts cannot be judged in the absence of information on the exact nature of the proposed dams and the status of planning and, in the case of Patuca III, implementation, the possible construction of any of the dams and associated access and power transmission infrastructure poses severe potential threats. It is important to understand that the lower Patuca River is the eastern boundary of the biosphere reserve as legally defined since 1997 which implies that any dam construction upriver would have direct effects on the ecology of the river constituting the boundary of the biosphere reserve,

Protection and management

Assessing Protection and Management

► Relationships with local people

Serious Concern

Relationships with local people are most conflictive in areas where local resource use and strict governmental protection coincide, namely in the core zone of the biosphere reserve. The difficult security situation and limited governmental presence across large parts of the property further limits mutual understanding and trust. Longstanding negotiation of access to resources and a revised biosphere reserve zonation recognizing local and indigenous economic and cultural needs are promising, yet have so far not been linked to the World Heritage arena. In fact, the revised zonation of the biosphere reserve has never been applied to the configuration of the World Heritage property as formally inscribed (Jaeger et al., 2011).

► Legal framework

Serious Concern

Part of what today constitutes the property was gazetted as an Archaeological National Park in 1969 (UNEP-WCMC, 2011). The spatial basis for the World Heritage inscription was a biosphere reserve as recognized by UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme in 1979. However, the spatial configuration of the biosphere reserve was fundamentally changed in 1997. In other words, the World Heritage property, as recognized in 1982, lacks a clear legal basis: Its current boundaries overlap but do not coincide with legally recognized protected area boundaries (Jaeger et al., 2011).

► Enforcement

Serious Concern

Law enforcement, with the notable exception of responding to invasions in the core zone of the biosphere reserve, is severely constrained due to the overall climate of lawlessness and limited governmental presence.

► Integration into regional and national planning systems

Serious Concern

Under the umbrella of the Mesomerican Biological Corridor and specifically the debate about the "Heart of the Corridor" the property is recognized as a highly significant contiguous complex of numerous protected areas of distinct categories on both sides of the international border between Honduras and Nicaragua (Jaeger et al., 2011). Given the important challenges in every single one of these protected areas, little priority is given to an overarching approach at the national levels, let alone the bi-lateral level.

► Management system

Serious Concern

In response to the second inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger, an inter-institutional Technical Committee has been set up under a 2011 Presidential Decree on a permanent basis to coordinate national and international efforts to manage and conserve the Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve (IUCN, 2014). ICF (Instituto Nacional de Conservación y Desarrollo

Forestal, Áreas Protegidas y Vida Silvestre) is the lead agency at the national level in charge of the national protected area system.

► Management effectiveness

Serious Concern

Despite the effective protection of the core zone of the biosphere even under adverse circumstances and temporarily promising trends (AFE/COHDEFOR, 2007), the overall security situation has been compromising the effectiveness of the management, as illustrated in the ongoing inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger (Jaeger et al., 2011).

► Implementation of Committee decisions and recommendations

Serious Concern

World Heritage Committee decisions have been centering around responses to the status on the List of World Heritage in Danger (e.g. World Heritage Committee 2017 and 2011). The comprehensive requests and recommendations remain to be fully addressed as a basis to permit the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger.

► Boundaries

Some Concern

A 1997 decree fundamentally revised the boundaries and zonation of the Biosphere Reserve and modified zoning patterns. However, no request was made to the World Heritage Committee to modify the boundaries of the World Heritage Property to match those of the biosphere reserve. This has led to a lack of clarity and a legal limbo regarding the boundaries of the property versus the legal biosphere reserve. Communication is further complicated by the fact that the property bears the term "biosphere reserve" in its name even though the biosphere reserve today does not spatially coincide at all with the World Heritage inscription. There can be no doubt that the clarification must be a priority (IUCN, 2014; Jaeger et al., 2011).

► Sustainable finance

Serious Concern

The declaration of the Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve as a national priority by

the 2011 Presidential Decree also mandated key institutions to give priority to implementation of the inter-institutional action plan for its defense. This implies that the financing of the implementation of the plan should e a priority. A decision has been made to use National Emergency Funds to finance initial activities. The decree also tasked the inter-agency Technical Committee with seeking and channeling international cooperation for this purpose. On-going project support in support of the Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve will complement the finance being provided through the National Emergency Fund. The general state of lawlessness is a major problem, however, and on-going efforts will have to be financed over many years if long-term impacts are to be achieved. It is too early to assesss if these efforts are indeed effective and can be sustained over the long run (IUCN, 2014).

► Staff training and development

Some Concern

Staff is highly motivated despite often difficult and at times threatening circumstances. While capacity development is apparently underway, as part of the action plan for the defense of the Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve, to improve the capacity of national, regional and local institutions to restore the rule of law, manage natural resource use, and conserve core areas (IUCN, 2014), the effectiveness is unknown.

► Sustainable use

Serious Concern

Sustainable use of natural resources by local communities and indigenous peoples is among the key priorities in the governance and management of the property. While the laws governing illegal commercial activities in protected areas must finally be enforced, the ongoing negotiation of zonation and access to natural resources must be linked to the World Heritage discussion (IUCN, 2014; Mission Report, 2011). Eventually, there must be clear rights and duties and local resource users must have say in decision-making.

► Education and interpretation programs

Data Deficient

Environmental education programs are being undertaken in local schools (IUCN, 2014).

► Tourism and visitation management

Some Concern

Despite the obvious attractiveness of the area, in particular along the Caribbean coast, tourism remains in its infancy and is restricted to a small niche of scientific and adventure tourism, primarily due to the combination of a difficult security situation and minimal infrastructure (IUCN, 2014).

► Monitoring

Data Deficient

The SIMONI (Sistema de Monitoreo Integral) is an exemplary platform specifically dedicated to the biosphere reserve providing information on a range of relevant indicators. At the time of writing the online service was not available for unknown reasons and it is hoped that the online data will eventually be in the public domain again. Overflights and field inspections are on-going to identify incursions into the core zone (IUCN, 2014; Jaeger et al., 2011).

► Research

Data Deficient

The governmental agency in charge of managing the property does not run a specific research programme. Over the years, there have been many individual research projects and studies on the ecology, people and the archeology of the area.

Overall assessment of protection and management

Serious Concern

A illustrated by the ongoing inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger, the overall protection and management of Río Plátano raises serious concerns. Insecurity, lawlessness and impunity continue to compromise all conservation efforts. While the State Party is actively working on a management response in line with requests and recommendations from

the World Heritage Committee, much remains to be done. ICF, the institution in charge of protected area management should be equipped with all resources needed while recognizing that the challenges at hand go well beyond the scope of protected area management.

▶ **Assessment of the effectiveness of protection and management in addressing threats outside the site**

Serious Concern

From a technical perspective there can be no doubt that the global conservation significance of the property is also a function of Rio Platano being an integral part of a much larger landscape featuring numerous important protected areas in both Honduras and Nicaragua. The term "Heart of the Corridor" has been coined to illustrate the central location and importance of the transboundary landscape in the framework of the Mesomerican Biological Corridor. Until the rule of law is re-established in the region and until the governance and management of individual protected areas will meet basic standards, it is unrealistic to expect meaningful synergy from cooperation between the many protected areas. Eventually, a coordinated approach is indispensable though, if the landscape is to maintain its exceptional biological and cultural wealth.

▶ **Best practice examples**

For all the challenges the property is facing, the revision of the zonation of the biosphere reserve to accommodate the economic and cultural rights and needs of indigenous peoples and local communities and the ongoing negotiation of access rights to natural resources is an exemplary effort to go beyond the limitations and contradictions of the earlier exclusive protected area model applied to the area.

State and trend of values

Assessing the current state and trend of values

World Heritage values

► Exceptionally beautiful landscape comprised of large, undisturbed expanses of tropical forests, savannahs, wetlands, and beaches

High Concern
Trend:Deteriorating

The landscape beauty is visibly affected by the increasing areas cleared for small-scale agricultural and ranching.

► On-going geological processes

Low Concern
Trend:Stable

Compared to the concerns about biodiversity at all levels, geological processes are not similarly affected due to their very nature even though it can be argued that flooding and sedimentation caused by erosion stemming from forest loss and degradation can affect river morphology (IUCN, 2014).

► Key site for the on-going evolution of ecological and biological processes for the full range of Caribbean coastal terrestrial, fresh water, marine ecosystems

High Concern
Trend:Deteriorating

From the perspective of the 1982 World Heritage inscription, there has been an indisputable loss and degradation of habitats and species. The advance of the agricultural frontier and associated pressures have taken a heavy toll on the integrity of the landscape. Started and proposed further hydropower dam construction further calls the future integrity into question. Nevertheless the property continues to be part of a much larger and remote landscape shared by Honduras and Nicaragua, which continues to be an exceptionally rich conservation gem of global importance with the potential important natural processes. The situation does, however, call the configuration of the property as formally inscribed into question. Consequently, the World Heritage Committee (2011) urged the State Party "to consider the various options to redefine the boundaries of the World Heritage property to reflect the increased size of the protected area, the new zonation, and the existing land uses, in order to ensure that the property's Outstanding Universal Value can

be more effectively conserved".

► Exceptional diversity of ecosystems, habitats and species

High Concern
Trend:Deteriorating

A complex and somewhat contradictory picture emerges 35 years after the World Heritage inscription. Some of the area inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1982 has since been converted to agricultural land and settlements and visibly does not meet basic integrity expectations Jaeger et al., 2011; Ohnesorge et al., 2006). At the same time, the overlapping core zone of the biosphere reserve as legally defined in 1997 continues to be covered in dense forests in its vast majority. Furthermore, there are large areas widely assumed to be of highest conservation value outside of the property, for example towards the northeast all the way to the Nicaraguan border. A reconfiguration of the boundaries, accepting irreversible degradation in some areas while assessing the feasibility of adding areas of possibly highest conservation value elsewhere, might be the only possibility to move ahead in the current situation.

Summary of the Values

► Assessment of the current state and trend of World Heritage values

Critical

Trend: Improving

Over the 35 years since inscription, the property has been subject to increasing pressures resulting in loss and degradation of forests through the advancing agricultural frontier and uncontrolled extraction of natural resources. This trend has been resulting in the inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger since 1996, briefly interrupted between 2007 and 2011. Parts of the property have lost important conservation values whereas vast adjacent areas outside of the property are widely assumed to be much more intact than the degraded areas of the property as formally inscribed. In addition to consolidating the governmental overall presence and stepping up the participatory management, this raises the fundamental question of the adequacy of the boundaries of the property. A reconfiguration of the boundaries, accepting irreversible degradation in some

areas while assessing the feasibility of adding areas of possibly highest conservation value elsewhere, might be the only possibility to move ahead in the current situation.

Additional information

Benefits

Understanding Benefits

- **Collection of medicinal resources for local use, Outdoor recreation and tourism, Natural beauty and scenery**

  The indigenous peoples and local communities on the remote Mosquitia region, including the ones of African origin (“Afrohondureños”), largely depend on wild biodiversity as medicines. The exceptionally beautiful landscape, especially the Caribbean coast, and the archeological treasures of the property have a major tourism potential, the development of which has so far been limited by the security situation.

- **Importance for research, Contribution to education**

  As the largest and most important protected area of the country, the property has major potential in terms of research and education. In addition to ecological research in one of the last large contiguous tracts of relatively intact forests and other ecosystems in Central America, the property has been keeping most of its archeological secrets since it was declared a National Archeological Park (Parque Arqueológico Nacional) in 1969, almost half a century ago. As in the case of tourism, one major limiting factor is the security situation.

- **Carbon sequestration, Soil stabilisation, Coastal protection, Flood prevention, Water provision (importance for water quantity and quality)**

  The forests and wetlands of the property provide the full range of forest

environmental services, including carbon sequestration. Especially the forests in the mountainous upper watershed of the Rio Platano River protect the soil and prevent flooding by buffering the torrential rains during the rainy season.

▶ **Legal subsistence hunting of wild game, Collection of wild plants and mushrooms, Fishing areas and conservation of fish stocks, Traditional agriculture, Livestock grazing areas**

The property and the larger biosphere reserve provide the full range of livelihood services for directly resource-dependent indigenous peoples and local communities inside and outside the property.

▶ **Access to drinking water**

The montane forests of the core zone in the higher reaches of the Rio Platano River watershed protect a critically important water reservoir for downstream users.

▶ **Cultural identity and sense of belonging, History and tradition, Sacred or symbolic plants or animals, Sacred natural sites or landscapes, Wilderness and iconic features**

The life, history, culture, belief system and economy of indigenous peoples and local communities is intricately linked with and dependent on the landscape, natural resources and biodiversity of the property and its surroundings. For many scientists and conservationists, the property is one of the last wild places in all of Central America.

▶ **Collection of timber, e.g. fuelwood, Sustainable extraction of materials (e.g. coral, shells, resin, rubber, grass, rattan, etc)**

Indigenous peoples and local communities use, and depend on, a wide range of biodiversity products collected in the forests, wetlands, savannas, rivers, lagoons and the ocean.

▶ **Tourism-related income, Provision of jobs**

The property provides limited direct income and employment in park management and tourism. This could change once the security situation may

permit the realization of the tourism potential.

Summary of benefits

As the largest and most important protected areas in Honduras and an integral part of one of the last large-scale and mostly intact forest ecosystems of the entire Mesoamerican subregion, the property epitomizes the many benefits of protected areas in the subregion. As most protected areas in Central America, the property is located in a marginalized and economically poor region where indigenous peoples and local communities directly depend on natural resources. While this creates a dilemma, it can also be argued that the protected areas conserve critically important benefits which would otherwise be eroding from competing land and resource use. Zonation and clear access rights are applied to approach a balance between conservation and local use and enable users to satisfy their material and cultural needs. The maintenance of significant forest cover has important benefits in terms of carbon sequestration, soil conservation and natural water regulation. The tourism potential of the property is undisputed but compromised by the security situation. Its realization would come with additional benefits, but also with new risks.

Projects

Compilation of active conservation projects

№	Organization/ individuals	Project duration	Brief description of Active Projects
1	GEF / Central American Commission on the Environment and Development	From: 2017 To: 2012	The GEF full size project "Transboundary heart of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor Project" had the objective to "improve the national management of the area of the proposed Corazon Transboundary Biosphere Reserve (CTBR), respecting the rights of traditional populations".

№	Organization/ individuals	Project duration	Brief description of Active Projects
2	Bilateral technical and financial cooperation	From: 2017 To: 2017	The German government has been cooperating in the management and conservation of the property with Honduran partners for many years in the form of financial (KfW) and technical (GIZ, formerly GTZ) cooperation. The partially ongoing cooperation projects established the integrated monitoring system SIMONI and facilitated the negotiation of sensitive access rights to natural resources (Ordenamiento Territorial y Protección del Medio Ambiente en Río Plátano" - PROTEP).
3	GEF / UNDP and partners	From: 2009 To: 2013	The GEF full size project "Conservation of Biodiversity in the Indigenous Productive Landscapes of the Mosquitia" was dedicated to the following objective: "To enable indigenous communities in the Moskitia to modify their productive practices in the forestry and fisheries sectors in order that these are compatible with biodiversity conservation, while respecting development needs and cultural norms." Executing agencies included the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment (SERNA), the Miskito indigenous organization MASTA, municipal governments, ICF and DIGEPESCA.

Compilation of potential site needs

№	Site need title	Brief description of potential site needs	Support needed for following years
1	Continued response to inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger since 2011	The inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2011 was based on the identification of clearly specified challenges, detailed in the latest Reactive Monitoring mission report and the corresponding decision of the World Heritage Committee in 2011. The State Party has since been consistently working on a management response. From a project need perspective, the consolidation of the management response so as to fully address the identified challenges and to permit the eventual removal of the property from the List of Wold Heritage in Danger continues to be the priority.	From: 2017 To: 2017

№	Site need title	Brief description of potential site needs	Support needed for following years
2	Transboundary communication, coordination and cooperation with Nicaragua	Building upon longstanding efforts and existing projects, any investment in joint approaches to the management and conservation of the transboundary ecosystem is a good investment in what is sometimes referred to as the "Heart of the Mesomerican Biological Corridor". Both UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme and the World Heritage Convention can serve as platforms, in addition to the regional Mesoamerican Biological Corridor.	From: 2017 To: 2017

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