

ECUADOR AND PERU TO INTRODUCE A BINATIONAL BIOSPHERE RESERVE



The authorities of Ecuador and Peru plan to create a "Binational Biosphere Reserve". The proposal includes protected area status for more than 1.7 million hectares, which should cover the Peruvian provinces of Sullana and Talara and the Ecuadorian cantons of Arenillas, Santa Rosa and Huaquillas.

The biosphere reserve is a response to the need to protect the mangrove ecosystem and existing wetlands, according to an Ecuadorian source from the Binational Plan. Paola Inga, Executive Director of the Plan on the Ecuadorian side, said that the expectation is that **the proposal will be presented at the World Congress of Biosphere Reserves, a forum where the benefits of the shared forest will be demonstrated**, as well as the need to protect its transborder biodiversity. The Ecuadorian side was declared a Biosphere Reserve in 2014.

Conservation of the woodland will guarantee the flow of wildlife and help maintain balance in the natural environment, which will raise the standard of living of the population living there, by promoting environmentally friendly production activities such as eco-tourism, hiking, wildlife observation and sustainable use of forest resources. This will also stimulate scientific research, stated Paola Inga.

"This process will also strengthen the land management of the local governments and incorporate locations in the urban-rural area," she added.

For his part, Alejandro La Rosa, from the National Service of Natural Protected Areas (Peru) (SERNANP), said that among the objectives for sustainable development of this ecosystem is the promotion of eco-tourism such as the Guayacán Route, which will sustain small local food and lodging businesses, as well as environmental clean-up and education to create an environmental culture.

The representative of the Ecuadorian Ministry of the Environment (MAE), Carlos Espinosa, highlighted the commitment given by the president to the binational presidential cabinet and ministerial meeting held recently in the Peruvian town of Jaén, to support the creation of the Binational Biosphere Reserve and the protection of the shared ecosystem, which is part of one of the areas of work between the two countries.

A total area of 741,033 hectares currently make up the Bosque Seco Biosphere Reserve in Southwest Ecuador and the Biosphere Reserve of Northwest Peru. The meeting to endorse the Ecuador - Peru interagency coordination initiative took place past week in Machala and was attended by representatives of UNECSO, the Dry Forest Commonwealth and the Binational Development Plan for the Border Region.

Jorge Ellis, UNESCO's Director of Earth Sciences, explained step by step the way forward for the preparing of the technical documentation that will serve as the basis for the biosphere reserve declaration, and he added that UNESCO will provide full support to obtain this new commitment to binational conservation after the president's firm pledge to protect the biodiversity that unites the two countries.

The task force responsible for drafting the document was drawn from the Ministry of the Environment, SERNANP and the Binational Plan, entities which will have UNESCO's MAB (Man and the Biosphere) programme as a framework.

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