



CONSERVATION AGREEMENT CASE STUDY No. 1

Bioitzá-Corozal-Zotz Conservation Agreement Maya Biosphere Reserve Multiple Use Zone and El Zotz Biotope

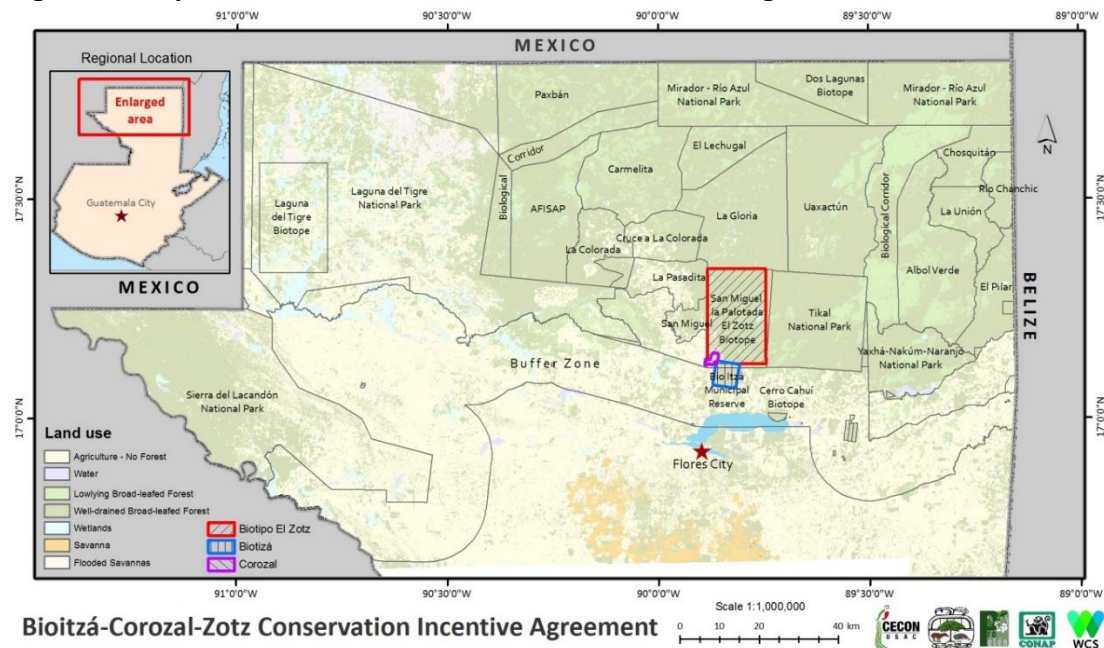
Institutional Collaboration to Reduce Deforestation and Fire

On January 28th 2015, the public signing ceremony of the Conservation Agreement for the Bioitzá Indigenous Community Reserve, the Corozal agricultural polygon and the San Miguel La Palotada (“El Zotz”) Biotope took place in the community of El Corozal in San José, Petén. The agreement was signed to reinforce protection patrols and the prevention and control of forest fires across 38,534 hectares.

The community of El Corozal is adjacent to the Bioitzá Municipal Reserve and the El Zotz Biotope (**Figure 1**). However, due to zoning restrictions Corozal residents do not have access to forest resources, and in the past they have engaged in agricultural and pastoral activities detrimental to the aforementioned protected areas.



Figure 1: Map of the Bioitzá-Corozal-Zotz Conservation Agreement Area



In this context, the participation of local authorities such as the president of the Community Development Council (COCODE), the village Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, as well as the Community Committee for the Prevention of Forest Fires has reduced the threat of fires originating from the use of fire for agricultural in the community lands and farms.

“In Petén, it’s the first time that a Conservation Agreement has been implemented in an area that includes two communities and different stakeholders sharing the same landscape. Collaboration in this landscape brings different challenges, but also the opportunity to obtain greater impact”. (Castillo, M. 2016)

Signatory institutions in the Bioltzá-Corozal-Zotz Conservation Agreement included the Corozal COCODE, the National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP), the Center for Conservation Studies of San Carlos de Guatemala University (CECON/USAC) and the Asociación Bioltzá. Witness of honor organizations consisted of Tikal National Park, Rainforest Alliance, and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS). Fundación ProPetén led civil society accompaniment, as the institution responsible for agreement coordination and engagement of stakeholders.

To achieve the objectives of the Conservation Agreement, a Control and Protection Unit (UCP) for the Protected Areas Block was established to promote interinstitutional coordination and implement the forest fire prevention and control and surveillance components of the Agreement. The UCP is composed of representatives of CECON-USAC, Asociación Bioltzá, Tikal National Park and CONAP.



Due to the partial presence of community-based rangers in the Bioltzá Reserve, agreement partners became engaged in the implementation of the agreement. Their contribution consisted of forest fire prevention activities and short-range patrols with multi-institutional forces focused on control and surveillance of the El Zotz Biotope and the Bioltzá Reserve.



Both of these management units are adjacent to Tikal National Park; as such one additional benefit of the agreement consisted of improved protection of the western and southwestern flanks of Tikal.

Outcomes of this collaboration during 2015 included the maintenance of 34 kilometers of fire breaks, 22 short-range patrols, two combined patrols, and one long-range patrol. These patrols served to dissuade illicit activities such as timber extraction, hunting, and extraction of other natural resources in these

protected areas, as well as reducing forest fires.

The following testimonials from the Conservation Agreement participants demonstrate the importance of interinstitutional collaboration in reducing fire and deforestation in the project area:

Mr. Reginaldo Chayax, President of the Asociación Bioltzá, stated the following:

“This agreement is of great benefit to us, and it arrived just when we were most in need of support to continue working towards the conservation and protection of the Bioltzá Reserve. Working together to prevent fires and conduct surveillance makes us stronger, as the saying goes “one swallow doesn’t make a summer”. Everyone knows about the threats present in the area, but often resources are scarce, and we feel helpless because we don’t receive any assistance to protect natural resources. We are children of Mother Earth, and we have to respect it because it gives us the food we need to live...”

Ing. Marvin Rosales, the Biotope manager responsible for CECON/USAC in Peten, stated the following with regard to interinstitutional collaboration:

“Bioltzá doesn’t have rangers at the moment, so we support them by providing our own personnel to conduct patrols in the Reserve area.”

After one year of implementation, the net impacts of the Bioltzá-Corozal-Zotz Conservation Agreement include:

- Greater collaboration: between national park personnel (Tikal), protected area personnel from the El Zotz Biotope (CECON/USAC), the members of the Asociación Bioltzá, and the community of Corozal, San José;
- Reduction of threats: Deforestation was reduced by 27.5% during the year of implementation, as compared to the average amount of deforestation in the project area during the three years prior to the Conservation Agreement. Similarly, the number of fire hot points was reduced by 47.4% when compared to the ten-year baseline prior to the agreement;
- Improved conservation of the Bioltzá Municipal Reserve: Due to the lack of funding for permanent Bioltzá guards, collaboration with CECON and Tikal National Park personnel helped improve protection of the Bioltzá reserve through increased patrolling and constructive engagement of the residents of the community of El Corozal.

Source:

McNab, R., Castillo, M., Zetina, J, Rodriguez, A., Ramos, V.H., Solis, N., Trujillo, D., Chacon, R., Obando, O., and A. Castellanos. (2016). *“Evaluating Conservation Agreements as a Tool for Conserving Nature and Improving Wellbeing of Rural Households in the Maya Biosphere Reserve, Guatemala”*. Wildlife Conservation Society Guatemala Program, Technical Paper No. 01.