
Honduras: Action to protect mangrove forests and wetlands against shrimp farming

Honduras has the obligation both under international and national law to protect 75,000 hectares of wetlands in the Gulf of Fonseca. On May 1999, The Honduran Government, through the Natural Resources and Environment Secretariat (SERNA), during the RAMSAR Convention on Wetlands, obtained the designation of the Coastal Wetlands of the Gulf of Fonseca as "RAMSAR Site 1000".

Despite this, Honduras is not fulfilling its obligation to protect the "RAMSAR 1000 Site". Thus, CODDEFFAGOLF (a grassroots organization in Honduras) and the Industrial Shrimp Action Network (ISA Net) are strongly urging the Honduran government to fulfill its obligations both under international and national laws. Exact hectares of the damage is difficult to calculate because the areas are guarded by goons with AK47.

Thus far, shrimp farming projects and the cutting of mangroves have been allowed inside the Ramsar Convention protected areas. This has resulted in the drying up of some of these otherwise protected wetlands of the Gulf of Fonseca. In "La Aguadera", Punta Ratón, where the project "Habitat and Species Management Area in San Lorenzo" is located, a shrimp farming project was completed occupying several hectares of beautiful mangroves. Trees have been felled in "El Gorrión" (The Sparrow), the location for the project "Las Iguanas y Punta de Condega Habitat and Species Management Area". In the "La Berberia Habitat and Species Management Area", several mangrove areas and swamps like "Los Comejenes" have been destroyed to construct shrimp ponds. The constant use of the highway along the lagoon of La Berberia along the Nicaraguan border has greatly damaged the coastal ecosystem.

Late last March, men felling trees using tractors in the zone of "El Carey" threatened a CODDEFFAGOLF member and expelled two government officials from the Environment Attorney's Office who tried to stop them. The government officials returned five days later with a group of policemen, found men operating four tractors, succeeded in stopping them momentarily, but later found them again felling trees and now using six tractors. The loggers boasted that nobody could stop them because they were "well protected".

In view of such situation, CODDEFFAGOLF and ISA Net are urging all those interested in the conservation of these wetlands to participate in a letter-writing campaign. Please write to:

Excellency Mr. President of Honduras Carlos Roberto Flores

Cc: Professor Rafael Pineda Ponce, President of Sovereign National Congress of Honduras

Cc: Dr. Delmar Blasco, Ramsar Convention Bureau, Gland, Switzerland

