
Mexico: Mangroves vs. Shrimp Farming and Golf Courses

The municipality of San Blas, Nayarit, Mexico is witnessing with great concern how the overdevelopment that has taken place in nearby Puerto Vallarta has attracted the attention of big investing consortia and spurred the ambitions of politicians and senior government officials from this country, resulting in a hoarding of lands, federal zones and mangroves for the purpose of commercial development.

At this moment, various shrimp farming projects of several thousand hectares are already under way. In particular a project of the "Granjas Aquanova, S.A. de C.V." company, which has already had a devastating impact on the ecosystem of this region, contaminating the estuaries with the residual waters and deforesting vast areas of mangroves. They have another project, with support from State and Federal governments, that will destroy several thousand hectares more.

In the field of tourism there are also negotiations for two mega-projects that would use more than 3500 hectares of Federal Zones and mangroves for the construction of 6 golf courses, more than 10 luxury hotels, marinas, etc. All of this is to take place with the consent of the local authorities who are now using repression to silence demands from local organizations. They argue that these demands are politically motivated. In the last two years or so, local NGOs have done their best to delay in all possible ways, the progress of these projects.

Some thirty years ago there were thousands of sea turtles coming to lay eggs on these shores every year. Now they are gone forever! The same thing will happen with all the migrating birds if the mangroves are turned into shrimp farming ponds and golf courses.

In such context, the local NGO "Grupo Ecologico Manglar" from San Blas, Nayarit, Mexico, <cpt@foreigner.uan.mx> is seeking support from the NGO community:

"We are too well aware of the enormous demands made upon your time and help from all parts of the world. But having resorted with little success to denunciation and lawsuits at the government level, we feel that we have no alternative and realize that the vested interests and corruption we are faced with are of international proportions. We feel that we have no alternative left but to turn for help to international ecological groups committed to the defense of the planet's health and ask them to intervene on our behalf, given the importance of these wetlands in the food chain and the future of life on earth. We thank you for your attention and look forward to hearing from you."

Source: Mangrove Action Project, 25 April 1998