



U.S. DEPARTMENT
OF THE INTERIOR
INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



DOI-ITAP

GUATEMALA

NEWS BULLETIN

Guatemala Raises the Stakes against Environmental Crimes

Guatemala's Supreme Court Signs National Environmental Law Enforcement Strategy -- Already Put Into Action

On September 6, 2018, Guatemala's Supreme Court of Justice (SCJ) signed a formal declaration, "Strategy to Strengthen Environmental Law Enforcement in Guatemala," raising the national profile of crimes against the environment and cultural heritage. This strategy aims to restructure and institutionalize a new judiciary system to address these crimes across the country, following on the successful environmental courts in three areas: Peten (established in 2015), Izabal (Feb 2018) and the Verapaces (Aug 2018). Planned next steps include the replication of these courts in other priority areas (highlands, south coast), each to be staffed with new environmental judges.

Jose Felipe Baquix, a SCJ Justice, stated during the event, "Following the positive results obtained [by the environmental court] in Peten, the Supreme Court saw the need to strengthen environmental law enforcement across the rest of the country."

Jose Antonio Pineda, the SCJ President (analogous to the U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice), emphasized that this strategy is key to "reducing the impunity we've historically had against this type of crime."



Guatemala's CONAP Promulgates Governance Monitoring Report for the Maya Biosphere Reserve (MBR) -- Already Put Into Action

At the same event, Guatemala's National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP) promulgated the "Governance Monitoring Report of the MBR, 6th Edition," This report, used to better inform decision-makers, consolidates 10+ years of data (e.g., environmental, land use, security, social) to measure trends on the management and health of the MBR. This report has been updated and published every 1-2 years since 2009.

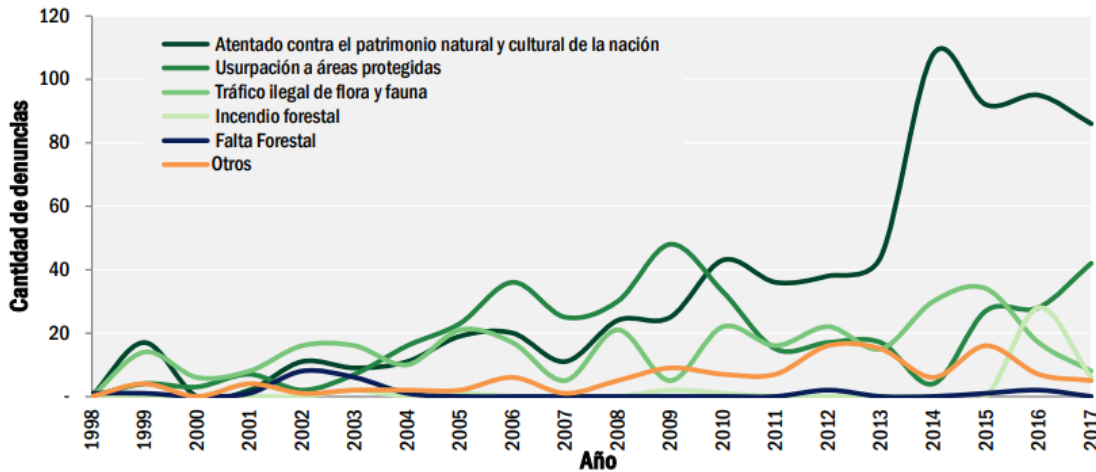
Source of data: Each edition relies on official data gathered from multiple Government of Guatemala agencies, as well as information collected through field patrols, overflights and satellite images.

This latest edition can be found in: http://conap.gob.gt/images/slide/GOBERNABILIDAD_20180906.pdf.

During this event, the CONAP Secretary Executive, Elmer Figueroa, highlighted a few of the latest important trends showcased in this report regarding illegally usurped land, citing "a total of 155,000 hectares [383,000 acres] has been recovered in the last 10 years," and "more than 9,000 hectares [22,000 acres] of recovered land is actively regenerating into natural forest."

For nearly 10 years, the Department of the Interior's International Technical Assistance Program (DOI-ITAP) and its local implementing partners -- Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), Asociacion Balam and the Environmental Justice Forum (EJF) -- have worked closely with the Guatemala's Public Ministry, CONAP and the SCJ, to raise awareness and build capacity for processing environmental crimes cases, the establishment of environmental courts, as well as the need for better understanding the trends for informed decision-making.

Both of these achievements are examples of necessary, long-term and team efforts. DOI-ITAP's work with the Government of Guatemala is funded by and coordinated with USAID and relies on collaboration with many local civil society and community groups.



Graphic excerpted from the "Governance Monitoring Report for the MBR," as an example of the data measured: Variations over time of the number of complaints or denouncements, by category, filed over time. Source: Legal Office, CONAP Region 7, 2017. Crime categories:

- black: crime against natural and cultural heritage
- dark green: usurpation of protected areas
- medium green: illegal trafficking of flora and fauna
- light green: forest fire
- blue: forest misdemeanor
- orange: others

MEDIA COVERAGE IN GUATEMALA:

Judicial Branch (Organismo Judicial)

Media video coverage (minutes 0:30-3:54):

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?feature=youtu.be&v=Bmm7v5rONmE>

<https://www.facebook.com/125498334137251/posts/1996273130393086/>

CONAP

https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=1830855410296245&id=479226092125857

Radio TGW La Voz de Guatemala

<http://radiotgw.gob.gt/organismo-judicial-firma-declaracion-de-cooperacion-para-fortalecer-la-justicia-ambiental-2/>

Diario de Centroamérica, Print media,

Article on page 7, "More than 150,000 Hectares Recovered" regarding the promulgation of the "Governance Monitoring Report for the MBR"

Editorial on page 8, "Working for the MBR"

https://issuu.com/dca/docs/edici_n_del_diario_de_centro_am_ric_62af56e26d4fc0

Foro de Justicia Ambiental de Peten

<https://www.facebook.com/109654022772690/posts/430670474004375/>