



FACT SHEET

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CONAGUA
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PROTEGIDAS



Water Reserves for the Environment.

An allocation approach for water security and adaptation

Abstract

The National Water Reserves Program is a public-private initiative to secure water for the environment in Mexico. It results from a 10-year process supported by Fundación Gonzalo Río Arronte (FGRA), the Interamerican Development Bank (IADB), and other donors, and with the participation of many NGOs. It aims to secure enough water to support ecological process and environmental services in 330 river basins in Mexico by 2020 that sustain living conditions of 5.2 million people, and healthy ecosystems in 97 natural protected areas and 55 wetland of international importance (Ramsar). It covers half of the country and it will be an outstanding contribution to transform water management in Mexico through transparency and accountability for water conservation. Budget initiative for 2016-2020 is USD 7.5 million, and current gap is USD 4 million.

Background

Since the publication of the National Water Law in 1989, Mexico has not been able to halt overexploitation of water sources. Currently, 8 out of 13 hydrological regions are considered under severe water stress, and 106 of the main aquifers are overexploited.

In 2005, WWF-Mexico creates an Alliance with Fundación Gonzalo Río Arronte that allows financing long term support to develop what was called “new water management models in Mexico”. It started working in three river basins to secure a sustainable water balance based on environmental flow (eflow) estimation and water allocation to the environment. As a result, a national eflow standard was adopted and then a national strategy for implementing it as a water reserve for the environment was developed. Water reserves concept is established by the National Water Law.

In 2012, the National Water Commission (CONAGUA), the federal water authority started up a nationwide program on Environmental Water Allocation (EWA) with the technical and financial support of WWF, FGRA and the Interamerican Development Bank, applying a national environmental flow (eflow) standard and the figure of “water reserves” in 330 river basins. Currently, eflows have been proposed for 55 river basins and water reserves have been established in 16 basins, with the participation of more than 100 experts, practitioners, and water managers. Results make this initiative a unique experience in the world.

The water reserve principle is that maintaining enough water for ecosystems sets the foundation for long-term water availability for all uses, and an adaptation strategy in the face of a changing climate. The water reserves program is also an outstanding freshwater ecosystems conservation strategy.

It has been a 10-year process, starting from the ground, testing methodologies, generating information, creating capacity and working groups, systematizing procedures, piloting, and getting a national agreement to achieve 330 river basin by the current administration. Currently, success has been supported by:

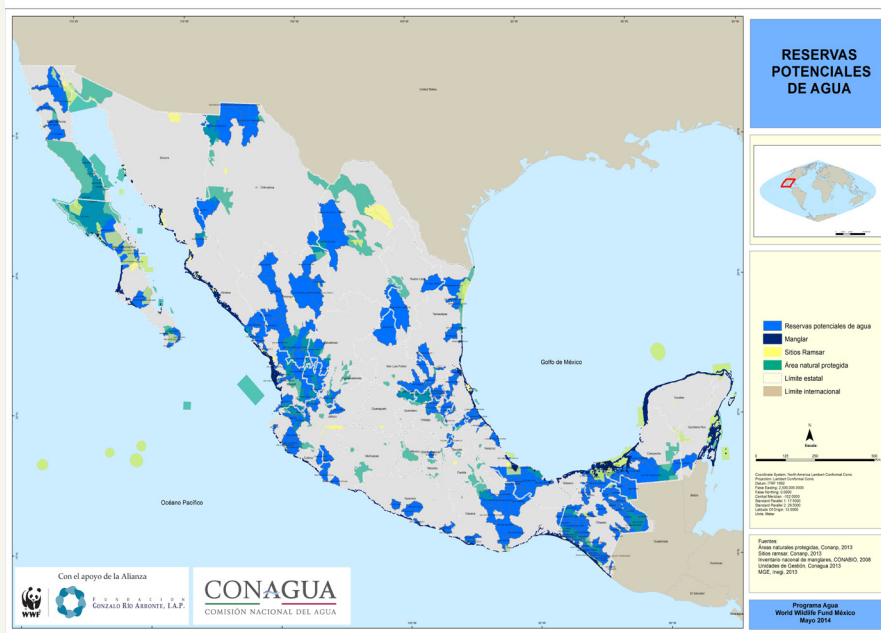
- Securing enough financial support to secure civil society active participation
- Integrating a professional water management team
- Establishing a partnership with the Mexican water authorities
- Creating an national working network

Objective

Built and consolidate a nationwide movement, where the National Water Commission (CONAGUA) as the national water authority in the federal government, environmental agencies, academic institutions, corporates and civil society, join to protect water for future generations.

Outcomes

An implementation strategy identified 189 out of 730 river basins in the country that are considered Potential Water Reserves and the first phase to allocate water for the environment at national level. Due to hydrological connectivity, adoption of and eflow for this 189 basins implies 330 river basins. Currently it has been applied in 55 river basins covering different regions and type of river basins (see map). The outcomes of this initiative are:



- Sustainable water extraction rates adopted by stakeholders
- A national planning tool based on the classification of the 730 river basins in the country based on eflow environmental objective (see map)
- A climate change adaptation strategy by securing buffer capacity to hydrological variability, and connectivity along the basin
- Strengthening of the national natural protected areas system by securing water for ecosystems and linking water and land management for biodiversity conservation (e.g. current eflow assessments identified conservation measures for 500 protected species)
- Securing water for indigenous communities: 189 water reserves are protecting water bodies for 46,000 communities with 5.2 million people
- Water management transparency and accountability: social recognition of a healthy water balance and effective management if water reserve is in place

Budget and activities

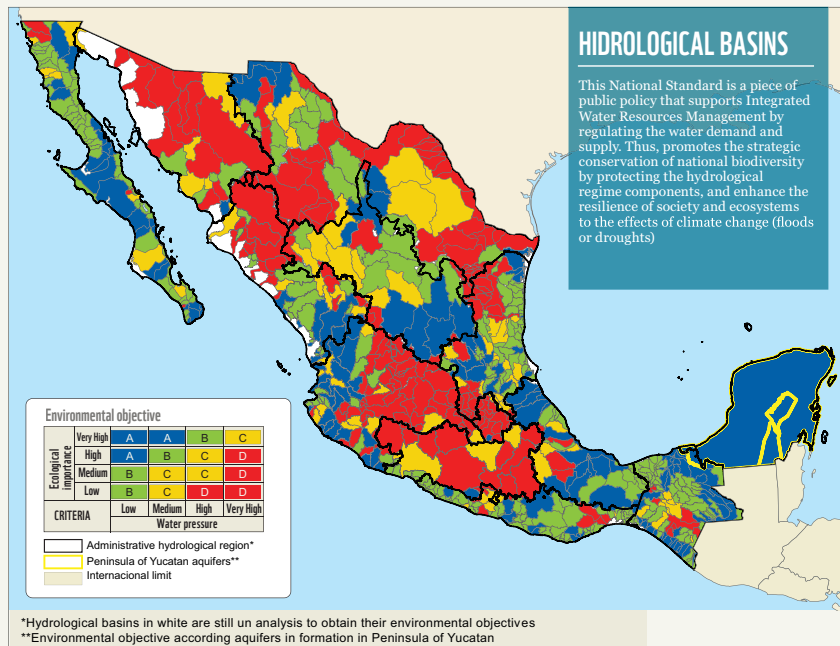
2016-2020 Budget estimation for the whole program is USD 7.5 million from which the FGRA has committed USD 1.4 million, and other donors USD 2 million. Currently, there is a USD 4 million gap.

Activities to be supported are: i) coordination of the program and policy development, ii) active engagement of civil society and private sector through communications, training and campaigning, iii) integration with other related instruments such as, water risk and stewardship, water banks, river basin report cards, land use planning, agricultural programs, tourism certification, and energy planning, and iv) presence in international fora.

Corporate engagement

Bringing corporates on board is one of the most important actions of the program in the near term. Corporate understanding of water security will strengthen the program and will contribute to consolidate a nationwide movement towards a new water management paradigm in Mexico.

Options for engagement are: i) direct contribution, ii) water stewardship in a specific region, river basin, or freshwater priority ecosystem, iii) supporting communication activities/campaign, iv) a tailor-made participation.



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Further reading – links

www.reservasdeagua.com.mx

www.wwf.org.mx/water-reserves

IADB-Programa Nacional de Reservas de Agua en México: experiencias de caudal ecológico y la asignación de agua al ambiente