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## **Mexico's Natural Protected Areas at risk due to budget cuts**

### **WWF Mexico position paper**

The conservation of more than 90 million hectares of terrestrial, coastal and marine areas where 1.5 million Mexicans live, including 36 indigenous communities, is at risk because of the recent announcement of the 75% budget reduction for operational expenses of the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP), which tomorrow Friday June 5 celebrates 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

WWF Mexico believes that this cut will paralyze the fundamental activities carried out by CONANP, including productive projects with communities, wildfires and the protection of sites that provide environmental services to the country's largest cities, threatening the livelihoods of thousands of people. These reductions will force CONANP to close dozens of field offices, affecting its capacity to continue working with local communities, as well as basic activities such as monitoring and protection.

Likewise, the opportunity to conserve these natural spaces, which are the solution that the planet requires to avoid pandemics like the one that humanity is currently facing, is put at risk. Without the presence of CONANP working hand in hand with local communities in the most valuable natural sites in Mexico, the pressure to transform original habitats will increase, affecting not only nature, but our own health. It is not yet possible to determine what will happen to the almost 1000 park rangers, most of them from local communities, who protect these areas as well as the more than 800 community enterprises that currently exist.

CONANP has been one of the noblest institutions of the Federal Public Administration, which was born two decades ago with the mission of conserving Mexico's most representative ecosystems and their biodiversity, promoting the sustainable development of local communities within the reserves and in the areas of influence, which represent all the country's ecosystems.

Since their establishment, Natural Protected Areas (NPA) have evolved with people. These natural spaces have become Mexico's natural vital organs, providing multiple environmental and social benefits. They are also the backbone of local sustainable economic development, in spite of great challenges such as land use change and continued deforestation, pollution, invasive species and increasing impacts of climate change.

Through its NPA, Mexico has constructed its own definition of conservation and sustainable development by integrating people in decision-making and supporting community development through the constant presence of hundreds of people in the territory. Through this, a unique governance has been achieved with agreements between multiple actors, which have generated alternatives and well-being for numerous communities that enjoy a healthy environment and a local economy based on natural resources. Examples



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include regenerative livestock, responsible fishing, non-timber forest management, nature tourism and the consolidation of organic coffee and cocoa bean production, among others. NPAs are also the main attraction of Mexico's tourism sector generating billions of pesos a year, they provide breeding grounds for the country's main fisheries and are the best protection against natural disasters.

Fulfilling CONANP's mission requires sufficient human, material and financial resources in order to deal with the increasing risks NPAs face, hand in hand with all the people who benefit from them.

Although the NPA model is constantly evolving and improving, this conservation instrument has proven to be the most effective worldwide. For this reason, the NPA are present in more than 190 countries under international agreements endorsed by the United Nations and its UNESCO agency and under programs such as Man and Biosphere, which are based on principles of inclusive and participatory conservation.

WWF makes a respectful call to decision-makers to recognize the vital role of NPA in Mexico's development, and their importance in complying with the international agreements acquired by our country and, therefore, provide budgetary sufficiency to the institution, in order to ensure the continuity of its mission and the ecological and evolutionary processes occurring in NPAs for the benefit of all Mexicans.

WWF reaffirms its commitment to work in coordination with all sectors, to seek resources that contribute to the protection, restoration and sustainable management of nature in Mexico, to ensure our livelihoods, our health and our economic development now and in the future.

### **About WWF**

WWF is one of the largest and most respected independent conservation organizations in the world, with more than 5 million supporters and an active global network in more than 100 countries. WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the earth's natural environment and build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, conserving the world's biological diversity, ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable, and promoting the reduction of pollution and waste consumption.

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