

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Mangrove Forests are Life

Economic prosperity depends on healthy, protected mangroves



Monitoring an area of restored mangrove forest in El Salvador's Bay of Jiquilisco using a drone. Photo by Nelson Rodriguez.

“A recent study found that 98 fish species depend on the mangroves of the Bay of Jiquilisco, contributing to the health of commercial fish populations.”

El Salvador is home to Central America's largest mangrove forest, the Bay of Jiquilisco. Mangroves are among the most protected forests in all of Central America, due in large part to the organizing efforts of local communities, including those EcoViva partners with.

Mangrove forests and the surrounding wetlands form a dynamic environment that can vary from saltwater to freshwater, and from occasionally flooded to permanently inundated. There are six mangrove species in the region that provide habitat for an incredible array of plant and animal species. A recent study found that 98 fish species depend on the mangroves of the Bay of Jiquilisco, contributing to the health of commercial fish populations.

Commercially important mollusks and crustaceans are also present in the lagoons, estuaries, beaches and sand dunes that surround the mangroves. The rural

communities we work with are fishers and farmers who depend on the natural environment to provide for their families. Healthy mangrove ecosystems mean healthy fisheries from which to fish, and healthy land on which to farm. Preserving and protecting mangroves is an important part of maintaining local economic prosperity. Together with our partners we have initiated restoration efforts on over 7,000 acres of degraded mangroves! ♦

DID YOU KNOW?

Mangroves remove more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere than tropical forests in a process known as carbon sequestration.

SEA TURTLES

Sea Turtle Eggs: From Commodity to Sustainable Resource

We work with over half a dozen sea turtle hatcheries in El Salvador, including one of the only women-led hatcheries in the country run by the Women's Association of Barra de Santiago, AMBAS. **To date, these hatcheries have incubated and released over 1.5 million sea turtles!**

Four species of sea turtles nest along the Salvadoran coast: green, olive ridley, hawksbill, and leatherback. According to IUCN's Red List of Threatened Species, leatherback and olive ridley populations are vulnerable, green sea turtles are endangered, and hawksbills are critically

endangered.

Our sea turtle conservation program is not just about sea turtles but ensures sustainable livelihoods for the local community. Sea turtle conservation benefits coastal communities by increasing tourism and providing sustainable livelihoods through egg collection and hatchling releases.

By collaborating with the hatchery, tortugueros (people who historically sold turtle eggs for human consumption) now make an honest income while protecting their environment. Our partners

conduct extensive community outreach and education to raise awareness. Once seen as a culinary delicacy and commodity, sea turtles are now viewed as an important part of the marine ecosystem that must be preserved for future generations. ♦

Interested in participating in a sea turtle hatchling release? We have an EcoViva tour in November, send us an email for more information: tours@ecoviva.org

Watch our new documentary on sea turtle conservation by Catherine Brookes: bit.ly/ecovivaseaturtles



Photo: Catherine Brookes

ECOVIVA UPDATE

Ana Luisa Moran Ahern to Serve as EcoViva's Executive Director



Ahern with AMBAS founder Rosa Aguilar. Photo by Emily Parker.

The EcoViva Board of Directors is excited to announce that Ana Luisa Moran Ahern, who has served as Interim Executive

Director since November, will be our new Executive Director. The board is excited to support Ana Luisa as she takes the helm during this new chapter for EcoViva.

As EcoViva's Program and Policy Director, Ana Luisa developed meaningful relationships with our partners, the Mangrove Association and AMBAS in El Salvador, and Red COMAL in Honduras. Ana Luisa has leveraged her skills and qualifications in marine conservation to advance our work in mangrove restoration and climate change adaptation.

She has lived and worked in Latin America for many years, and brings a unique perspective

to EcoViva's commitment to environmental and economic justice for the communities we work with.

Ana Luisa shared: "As a member of the EcoViva family, I am grateful to be a part of expanding our organization's reach to more communities in Latin America. I am looking forward to deepening my relationships with our partners and our dedicated supporters like you." Please join us in welcoming Ana Luisa as EcoViva's new Executive Director! ♦

Keep in touch and get important updates: bit.ly/ecovivaemail

WATER & SANITATION



Thanks to a 15-year partnership with volunteer engineers from Iowa, over 14,000 people now have access to clean drinking water. These water systems were built through the concerted labor of local residents working alongside EcoViva and the Iowa engineers. We are grateful that they have shared their expertise with our partners on the ground in El Salvador. Our partnership continues as we expand potable water systems to the most remote village areas.



“I have been involved with Engineers Without Borders in the Bajo Lempa for over 10 years. The work is rewarding, but the many friendships that my colleagues and I have made in the communities are why we return. Literally working side by side with members of a community creates deep personal connections with the people. El Salvador is not a foreign country to me, it’s a second home.” - Mike Saeugling, Iowa Engineer



“We’ve met several engineers from Iowa who shared their knowledge with us. Together, we installed a drinking water system in the Isla Montecristo community. They helped us complete studies to identify the best water source and increase our water supply. Water is life, and because of the contributions of the engineers, all of the inhabitants of the community will have access to this precious resource.” - Elmer Molina, Director of the Isla Montecristo community organization

Photos: Mike Saeugling and Douglas Chica

FOOD SECURITY

Diversified Agriculture Program Boosts Climate Resilience

The Mangrove Association, our primary partner in El Salvador, runs a diversified agriculture program that works to mitigate crop vulnerability and help small-scale farmers affected by extreme weather, like those who were devastated by last year’s drought. The program has improved food security for more than 350 families in the Bay of Jiquilisco.

Through comprehensive trainings, farmers gain expertise in organic agriculture and learn how to diversify their crops so they can withstand the increasingly erratic weather patterns that are impacting the region. Growing multiple crops, a practice known as polyculture, instead of



Farmer picks peppers from the Mangrove Association greenhouse in Ciudad Romero. Photo by Diego Vivanco.

relying on fewer crop types, as in traditional monoculture, can increase overall yield and allow farmers to adapt to a harsher climate.

Farmers learn to integrate many different types of vegetables, grains, fruit trees, farm animals and fish ponds into a resilient

and interdependent system that strengthens and magnifies production capabilities.

The program distributes 120,000 organic vegetable seedlings and fruit tree saplings to farmers each year. This season, the Mangrove Association is growing green pepper, tomato and cucumber seedlings. These vegetables are high yield and grow steadily throughout the season, so farmers can harvest profitable levels of produce each week.

The program not only increases the capacity of farmers to implement organic agricultural production, but also trains local youth to manage family gardens, school gardens, and greenhouses. ♦



Conservation & Youth Leadership: El Salvador & Honduras, November 8th-16th

Immerse yourself in history and culture, share stories with passionate young leaders, and witness firsthand the positive impacts of effective grassroots community organizing.

Join us on an EcoViva Tour! Contact us at tours@ecoviva.org or (510) 835-1334



Return service requested
Visit us at www.ecoviva.org
Printed on 100% recycled paper 

IN THIS ISSUE

- ▶ Mangrove Forests are Life
- ▶ Sea Turtle Eggs: From Commodity to Sustainable Resource
- ▶ Ana Luisa Moran Ahern to Serve as EcoViva's Executive Director
- ▶ Diversified Agriculture Program Boosts Climate Resilience



Art by Lauren Elber

YOUR IMPACT



One of the best ways to support our partners as they implement innovative solutions to poverty, environmental degradation and climate change is to contribute to our ChangeMaker Fund through a monthly gift. As a ChangeMaker, you can directly support community leaders year-round. **Your monthly donation will make a difference:**

- \$100 restores an acre of degraded mangrove forest
- \$50 trains one young woman as a radio host
- \$25 supports a volunteer park ranger to protect the Bay of Jiquilisco Biosphere Reserve
- \$10 incubates and releases a sea turtle hatchling



Any amount makes a significant impact.
Become a ChangeMaker today:
bit.ly/ecovivachangemaker