

What have we done?

What have we done? And what are the challenges?

With CEASPA and others' support to government agencies, the San Lorenzo National Park, established in 1999, has signage, and the limits are marked. Uniformed park guards patrol the area, they have received training and have basic equipment. The Management Plan was approved and is being implemented, 2004-2008, also the Patrol Plan, and the Environmental Education plan. Contact us about the special funds for universities and local communities for educational activities in the Park.

Moreover CEASPA has published a book for visitors to the Park interested in the natural and cultural resources, and two in Spanish, in addition to producing a 10 minute video, and a bilingual guide map. We set up a dedicated bank account for the San Lorenzo National Park, managed by the Fundación Natura, to receive donations and proceeds from book sales and fees from visitors to the Trogon Trail on the Achiote Road. That Trail is managed by the Rapaces Ecotourism Group in Achiote, with CEASPA and ANAM, contact the Centro El Tucán for local guides and to obtain your copy of the Achiote Road Bird List, and the Interpretative Guide to the Trail. Página web www.achiotecoturismo.com , teléfono del Centro El Tucán 6567- 5634

San Lorenzo has two facilities for receiving visitors, the welcome office managed by ANAM at the entrance to the Park on the road to Fort San Lorenzo, where visitors pay entrance fees and receive pamphlets about the Park, also the El Tucán Visitors Center in Achiote, run by CEASPA. Nearby there are trails and lookout decks specially built for visitors, and the Cascá Restaurant, managed by the local Rapaces Ecotourism Group.

CEASPA has worked in community development and promotion with local authorities and community groups in sustainable production, shade coffee, art, theatre and puppets, and ecotourism. Local people have been trained to carry out avian studies on nesting in the Achiote Road forests, and to carry out Raptor migration counts, and Monitoring of Overwintering Survival among migratory birds, both in the park and buffer zone. Local schools and communities organize an annual Bird and Coffee Festival, in Achiote in October.

In cultural heritage at the World Heritage Site Fort San Lorenzo, CEASPA has supported the World Monument Fund and the National Culture Institute in studies on the need for consolidation of the ruins and site interpretation. In Achiote we have sponsored initial surveys of pre-Colombian artefacts, of great importance considering the lack of research and information on archaeological sites on the Atlantic side of Panama. And CEASPA supported the US Forest Service teams that carried out studies on Limits to Acceptable Change for Fort San Lorenzo, studies on kayaking on the Chagres River, and Management of Recreational Opportunities and Scenery for the San Lorenzo National Park. (Studies available in ANAM Library, in Albrook and at the Centro El Tucán in Achiote.)

The Challenges

- Canal expansion, Third Set of Locks

This is a big challenge to management of the Park and people who live in the surrounding areas, as there are several major projects that are on the Park limits, such as dredge spoil deposits, the raising of the level of Gatun Lake, and modifications to the Gatun Dam and Spillway, in addition to related construction works. Aquí va la animación de cómo quedarán las nuevas esclusas de Gatún.

- New Tunnel or Bridge across the Canal

Another huge challenge will be the building of a bridge or tunnel to allow unimpeded vehicular access to the Costa Abajo of Colon. This is promised once the new third set of locks is completed, ie after 2015. Currently people pass using a small bridge over the Gatun Locks, that swings open and shut each time a ship goes through the Locks. A ferry service is promised by the Panama Canal Authority as an alternative. Aquí va foto del puente nuevo, y enlace para ver el video del paso actual por el puentecito.

What do you think about the new bridge? What pressures do you consider it will bring on the lands and people who live on the west bank of the Canal? We are very interested in your opinion, please share it! (poner enlace de contacto o para enviar comentarios)

- A proposed Visitors Center at Fort San Lorenzo

The USAID is proposing to building a Visitors Center at the World Heritage Site, Fort San Lorenzo, sometime in 2007. See the photo… What do you think? We would like to hear from you. (poner la foto del nuevo Centro de Visitantes propuesto, y vínculo de contactos/comentarios).