Costa Rica pledges to improve protection of its wetlands

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Costa Rica

President Luis Guillermo Solís and other government officials have officially launched the new National Wetlands Policy, a road map to the preservation of Costa Rica’s more than 2,000 water sources and reservoirs.

At a signing ceremony held on Monday, environment officials said they have already started working on some of the plan’s actions including a National Wetland Inventory, a project to compile an updated list of all water sources in the country.

The plan, for the first time, proposes measures to protect wetlands at risk and to rehabilitate those facing deterioration. The document outlines tasks, goals and responsibilities distributed among various ministries and public agencies. Various non-govermental organizations also are part of the plan’s goals.

Environment Minister Édgar Gutiérrez said the plan will help the government improve the supervision and protection of all the country’s bodies of water. The plan focuses on five main areas: conservation, climate adaptation, ecological rehabilitation, strengthening of environmental agencies and inclusive participation. The last area is designed to involve indigenous people and residents of rural communities in the decision-making process.

ESSENTIAL ECOSYSTEMS

The drafting of the government’s plan took almost two years. The final document lists a series of actions to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change on Costa Rica’s ecosystems, particularly on wetlands.

Measures aim at protecting ecosystems in rivers, creeks, lakes and lagoons, as well as marshes, flood plains, mangroves, coral reefs, the seabed and marine waters.

Wetlands represent nearly seven percent of Costa Rican territory. All these natural water reservoirs are key to counteracting the effects of climate change here, Gutiérrez said. They also provide food, fresh water, fiber, biochemicals and genetic materials.

“Wetlands also fulfill recreational, aesthetic, educational and
spiritual functions that are part of our culture,” the minister said.

The plan also involves a promotion strategy, including some informative videos that will air in coming days.

View the Ramsar Sites in Costa Rica
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