

# Ramsar Advisory Mission to Panama, November 2008

07/12/2009

Bahía de Panama (48,919 ha), situated on the Pacific coast of Panama, was designated as a Ramsar site no. 1319 in October 2003 and San San-Pond Sak (16,414 ha) as Ramsar site no. 611, in June 1993.



In October 2007 the Government of Panama (ANAM) requested the Ramsar Secretariat to send a mission to assess the status of these two Ramsar sites as they were facing different threats that could affect the ecological character of the sites.

In order to assess those threats and provide some recommendations to ANAM, a Ramsar Advisory Mission (RAM) visited the area between 18-28 November 2008, reviewed documents, and consulted with government officials, NGOs, and local communities.

San San-Pond Sak is being affected by the pressure of such different human activities as banana tree plantation, unsustainable tourism, and pollution. The construction of some dams upstream will probably affect its ecological character in the future.

Bahía de Panama has faced and continues to face important modifications to its ecological characteristics due to river modifications, as well as wetlands drainage and land reclamation for urban expansions of Panama city. Water pollution presents a high potential risk for human health, and the mangroves are being impacted by sand extraction, chemical factories, and livestock activities.

The ecological character modifications of San San-Pond Sak and Bahia de Panama affect the functions and services they provide, thus having an impact in human health and the loss of housing, crops, and so on.

In brief summary, the Ramsar Advisory Mission recommended that San San-Pond Sak and Bahia de Panama be included in the Montreux Record of Ramsar sites where changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring, or are likely to occur as a result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference.

Other highlighted measures recommended by the mission for San San-Pond Sak are:

- 1) Consult and collaborate with Pronat to use the land tenure study results
- 2) Have a clear definition of the limits of the Ramsar site and the protected area
- 3) Update the current management plan
- 4) Undertake a land use zoning in the Ramsar site
- 5) Regulate the river transportation

6) Do not accept tourism developments inside the Ramsar site and where they can affect the ecological character of the site.

For the Bahía de Panama Ramsar site:

- 1) Designate the site as a protected area in national legislation
- 2) Update the Ramsar Information Sheet including in the new limits all of the wetlands of the coastal-marine zone (mangroves, lagoons, estuaries)
- 3) Prepare a management plan
- 4) Undertake a land use zoning in the Ramsar site
- 5) Carry out hydrological rehabilitation and restoration of the mangrove areas affected by the road from Río Tapia to Pacora river
- 6) Monitor the activities of sand extraction and acetylene production in the Ramsar site to ensure that they fulfill the environmental law regulations
- 7) Monitor of the water quality in estuaries, coastal zone, waterbirds.

[The report of the mission](#), which was carried out by María Rivera and Montserrat Carbonell, is available here (in Spanish).