



# Community-Based Management of Environmental Challenges in Latin America

Newsletter n° 1. June 2012

## Kickoff meeting with the members of COMET-LA in University of Córdoba

Members of the project “Community management of environmental challenges in Latin America” (COMET-LA) met in January at the University of Córdoba (UCO).

Professor M<sup>a</sup> del Mar DELGADO from UCO leads a research project that will identify and analyze local solutions developed to prevent and resolve tensions arising from the use

of natural resources, including ecosystem services, due to environmental and climatic changes. The COMET-LA research project is funded by the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme of the European Commission.

The project aims to combine scientific knowledge and local knowledge working with communities facing environmental problems, so that in each coun-

try of study (Colombia, Mexico and Argentina) universities will work closely with social organizations.

In total there are seven research institutions (3 Latin American and 4 European, including UCO), 3 NGOs in Colombia, Mexico and Argentina, and the Spanish Committee of IUCN as a global organization.

[Read full news](#)



COMET-LA team and images of workshop in Cordoba



The study will focus on forest management in Mexico, water management and biodiversity in Colombia, and coastal and marine management in Argentina

[Download flyer of the project](#)

[Visit our website www.comet-la.eu](http://www.comet-la.eu)



## Who we are?



Norsk institutt for luftforskning  
Norwegian Institute for Air Research



UNIVERSIDAD DE CÓRDOBA



Sagremarisco



Estudios Rurales y Asesoría



AQUA  
MARINA  
centro de estudios  
en ciencias marinas



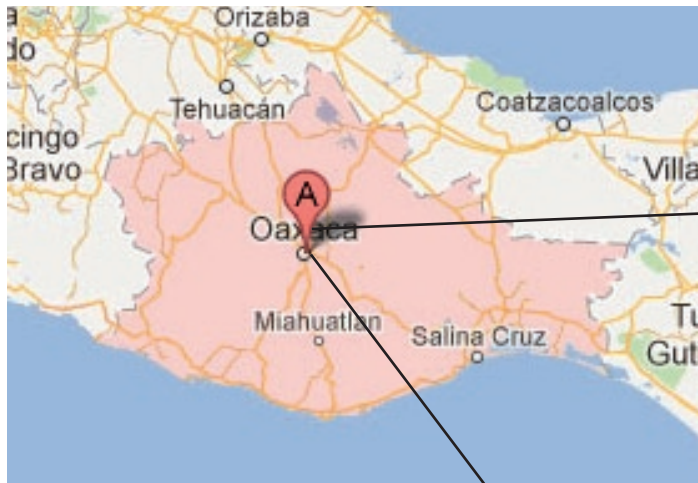
Pontificia Universidad  
**JAVERIANA**  
Bogotá  
Facultad de Estudios Ambientales y Rurales



The James  
**Hutton**  
Institute



## COMET-LA in MÉXICO



In the case of Mexico, both the Faculty of Economics of the UNAM and the Civil Association for Rural Studies and Advisory Services (ERA) are the institutions responsible for meeting the project objectives. The research team is formed by specialists in the field, international well known researchers and doctorate master's and bachelor's students from UNAM.

One of the key points supporting the implementation of this joint effort, is that Mexico has currently 128 million hectares covered by forests and other vegetation, but has one of the highest rates of deforestation. FAO estimates that the deforestation rate is of 600,000 hectares per year; more optimistic approaches indicate that only 400,000 hectares are lost annually (Conafor, 2004). Considering the role played by forests in the global climate balance, any of these scenarios lead to an alarming situation.

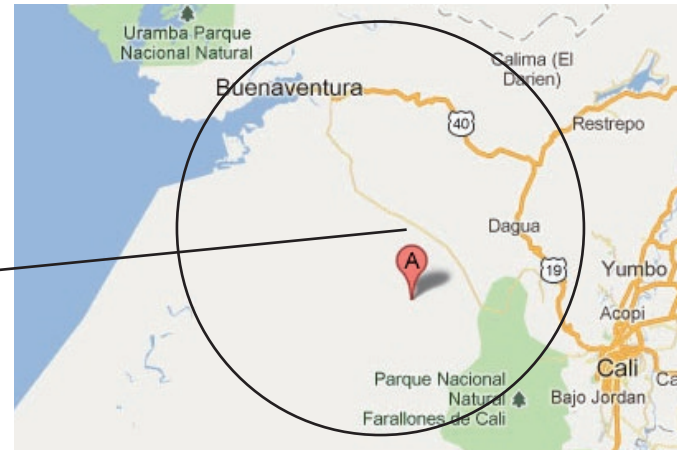
Currently the research team works in the community of Santiago Comaltepec -Oaxaca-, an indigenous community that has strongly supported processes towards promoting collective ownership of natural resources. It has also achieved a sustainable forest management system certified by the Board of Forest Stewardship Council (FSC for its acronym in English).

Fieldwork will be developed over the next three years of work.

D. Roberto Escalante,  
Professor of Economics at UNAM



## COMET-LA in COLOMBIA



The growing crisis of extinction shows that biodiversity and water cannot resist the current pressures that humanity is putting on the planet. It is therefore necessary to identify and study systems of governance based on local knowledge regarding biodiversity and water to facilitate initiatives and develop common agendas between government and civil society, particularly at a local/community scale as well as the private sector.

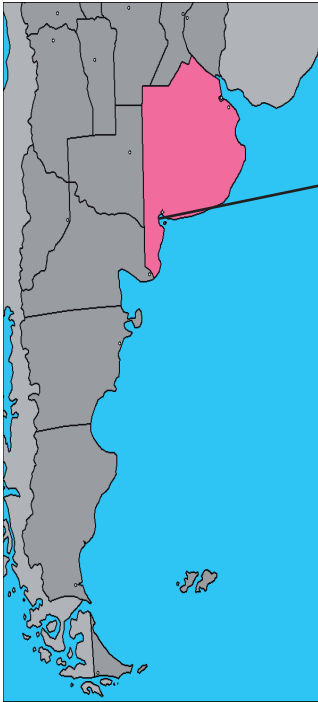
Colombia with just 0.8% of the world area, is classified as one of the seventeen countries holding more biodiversity in the world. Specifically the project will work with two Community Councils of black communities established in the Pacific basin: the Upper and Middle Dagua, and the Lower Rio Calima.

Several conflicts connected with the access to and use of natural resources can be observed in this territory: conflicts for accessing natural resources (e.g. illegal timber extraction, mining and hunting), overexploitation of natural resources (particularly forest and fisheries), infrastructure development affecting ecosystems and local communities, conflicts in the access to and forms of use of water, presence of illicit crops and illegal armed groups. COMET-LA will contribute to the empowerment of local communities and will give them tools and capabilities to deal with these situations.

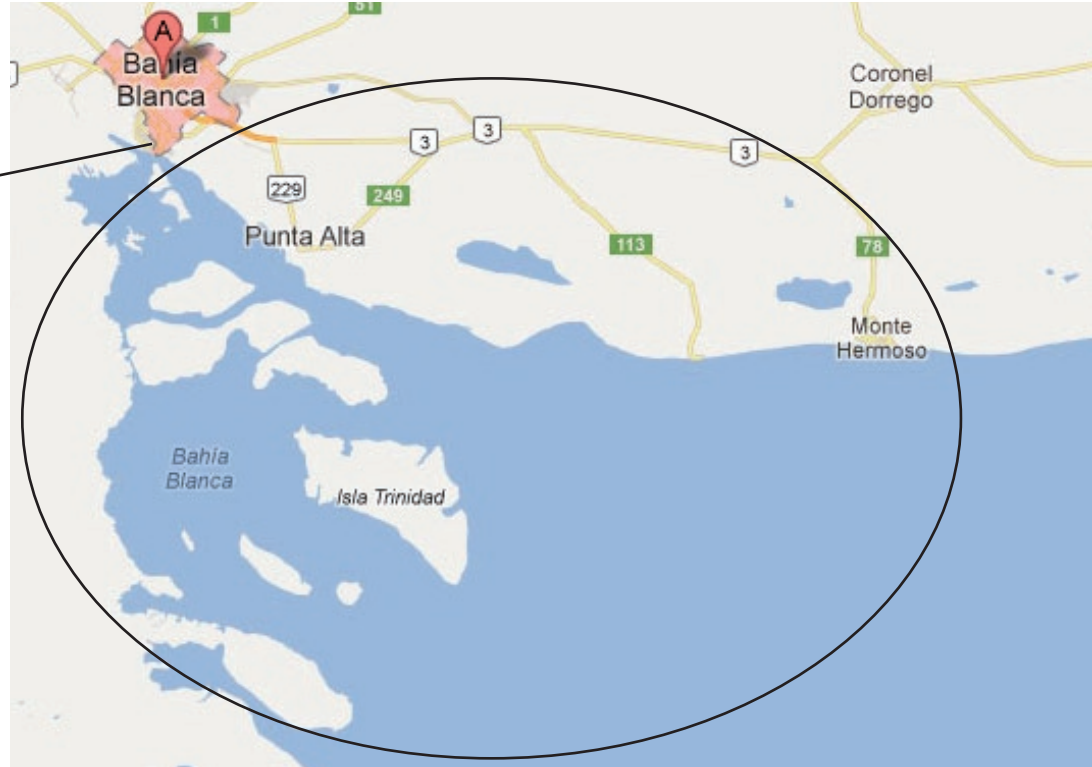


Video presentation of the project in Colombia

## COMET-LA in ARGENTINA



[Download flyer of COMET-LA Argentina](#)



In Argentina, researchers at the Argentine Institute of Oceanography (IADO) CONICET, Bahía Blanca, and AquaMarina Foundation - Center for Marine Science will work on the improvement of coastal and marine management, especially in the estuary of Bahía Blanca.

The representative of IADO, Gerardo Perillo, has reported that the project covers “a wide range of criteria” and takes place in an area of “potential damage by urban and port development, affecting the fishing and recreational craft”.

The idea, explained Perillo, is to develop an integrated coastal management program with the active participation of users to show their vision of the problems and pose solutions. Meanwhile, Pablo Bordino, Marine Conservation Biologist and Director of Foundation AquaMarina, said “it is an honor and a responsibility to work together with IADO in an international project. We will be not only represent Argentina but work with the actors in the coastal environment to establish a socioeconomic characterization of the area of Bahía Blanca estuary”.

It has formed a team with specialists from both entities, in addition to professionals from the Universidad Nacional del Sur.

This group will perform a precise socioeconomic characterization of the area between General Cerri, Engineer White, Punta Alta, Pehuén Tak and Monte Hermoso, and establish the extent to which factors associated with that characterization influence perception that actors have of the effects of climate variability in the development of productive activities and socio-economic aspects of their daily lives.



Vídeo - “Hola Pehuén!” (local TV) made a report to the project

## NEWS OF THE PROJECT

### First working workshops in México, Colombia and Argentina



The Mexican COMET-LA team conducted a first visit to Santiago Comaltepec to develop a feedback process of the initial proposals made by UNAM-ERA. Moreover, the project on radio listeners from XE-GLO Guelatao were presented and disseminated; a monitoring survey of the area was conducted by



the UNAM; and the project was finally approved by the General Assembly of "commoners". Researchers from UNAM could work closely the local communities hence facilitating future coming field work.



[Access to the report](#)



The objective of the first Colombian COMETLA team field workshop was to socialize the project with members of the Board of Directors of both Community Councils involving the Black Community, discuss the conceptual project basis and define the methodology,



as well as start planning the deliverables and strategic events to be developed in the short to medium term.



[Access to the report](#)



The Argentinean COMET-LA team visited the towns of Argentina Pehuén Co, Monte Hermoso and Engineer White, where it met with residents of the area to explain the objectives and methodology of COMET-LA project.



Also worked to involve communities in identifying the main problems of the estuary of Bahia Blanca and announced that it will develop a work of participatory analysis with main agents in the area.



[Access to the report](#)



## NEWS OF THE PROJECT

### COMET-LA priorities risen worldwide

COMET-LA project priorities will be at the V World Conservation Congress, to be held from 6 to 15 September in Jeju (South Korea).

The Spanish Committee of IUCN has prepared a motion for each case study, to be discussed at the IUCN and, if approved by the assembly of members, will become part of the organization's agenda for the next four years.

The motion dedicated to the Mexico case study addresses the need to combine the management of the National Protected Areas under the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP) with participatory governance and

equitable sharing of local and indigenous communities of Oaxaca.

[See motion](#)

In Colombia, it is requested to strengthen the autonomy of the Black Communities for the sustainable management of natural resources in their areas, with particular emphasis on mining.

[See motion](#)

Finally, in the Argentinian context, expresses the need to increase the empowerment of local communities to conserve and manage internal and external sector of the estuary of Bahia Blanca.

[See motion](#)

### Dissemination of Comet LA at international conferences

The COMET LA team planned to disseminate the project at major international conferences. As some of these conferences where in the first 6 months of the project, it had been too early to register and submit abstracts specific to the project. The COMET LA team therefore jointly produced a dissemination leaflet to be distributed at conferences and workshops that researchers attended. This was produced in English (EN) and then translated into Spanish (ES) so 2 versions are available. Another version will soon be available in Portuguese (PT).

## ACTIVITIES FOR THE NEXT SIX MONTHS

10th July, 2012

NILU will present the project COMET-LA in the Conference ASLO

30th July, 2012

Javeriana University and University of Cordoba will present the project at the World Congress of Rural Sociology

11th to 19th August, 2012

COMET-LA team's first visit to Mexico, where there will be workshops and a forum with key stakeholders

20th to 26th August, 2012

COMET-LA team's first visit to Colombia, where there will be workshops and a forum with key stakeholders

27th August to 1st September, 2012

COMET-LA team's first visit to Argentina, where there will be workshops and a forum with key stakeholders

6th to 16th September, 2012

CeUICN participates in the V World Conservation Congress, which will discuss the motions developed for the COMET-LA and be subject to approval. If these were accepted, will become IUCN Resolutions

1th October, 2012

University of Cordoba and NILU will participate in the EcoSummit

During this semester will be agreed methodology with communities and will begin the investigation in accordance therewith.