

Establishment of Batipa Field Institute – Research and Education for Conservation and Sustainability

SENACYT Project Proposal Authored by Dr. Russ Mullen, Iowa State University -Consultant to Oteima University under the Fulbright program from USA Embassy

Project Vision:

- To strengthen Panama's internal capacity to build international visibility and capacities for collaborative research and education in the neo-tropics
- To empower students' and scientists' in the application of a scientific approach and knowledge to conservation of natural resources and sustainable development.

Goal: - To form a collaborative and multidisciplinary project linking Oteima University, the Batipa Private Foundation, other organizations and the Panamanian government in a joint effort to create a field institute for research and education in Panama. The Batipa Field Institute and its location will add to the country's capacity for land-based educational and research programs in conservation and sustainable management of natural resources complementing the mission of COIBA and extending the reach of research and educational programs from island and marine ecology to the estuary and land-based ecology. Batipa's location provides a physical link from COIBA to the beginning of the Gualaca Altitudinal Corridor which extends to the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor providing exceptional study opportunities in the western hemisphere.

Need:

Panama is one of the world's most important and rich areas of biological diversity due to its unique geographic location. Only 2 percent of the earth's land makes up the country of Panama, but it is home to 12% of the world's species. Thus, Panama by default has a great responsibility and opportunity to provide world leadership in conservation and sustainable development within the interface of human activity and economic development. Batipa is one of Panama's largest privately owned areas that consist of an ecologically sensitive and diverse set of zones ranging from marine biology, mangroves, primary lowland forest, grassland, and wildlife corridors. Batipa is the Pacific link to the Gualaca Altitudinal Corridor that connects to the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor of Central America.

The establishment of the Batipa Field Institute is needed to create a research and educational mission which will focus on applying scientific methods of problem solving and critical analysis to approach sustainable development problems and economic empowerment of rural and indigenous communities. While there are many examples of organizations in Panama that focus on the academic learning experience of participating students, the Batipa Field Institute will focus on empowering people and their communities to apply a scientific approach to discover and apply knowledge of preserving ecological diversity and managing natural resources within human economic activities. Batipa investigations can provide the interface of scientific knowledge with indigenous wisdom to apply knowledge to sustainable development activities. Panama has the necessary species of plants for the preservation of wildlife corridors. Besides the reintroduction of the Scarlet Macaw and the studies of the yellow billed Cotinga, other long range goals are the establishment of a primate research/conservation center, and an international center for scientific research and exchange in many areas: (forestry, entomology, ornithology, botany, biology, ecology, crop science, soil science, marine biology and anthropology, etc).

Benefits and Outcomes

1. Establishment of a field institute for research and education in conservation and sustainable management of natural resources; expanding opportunities of other institutions and organizations to incorporate field based conservation studies in their programs
2. Strengthens the COIBA project mission by increasing the country's capacity for mainland educational and research programs in conservation and sustainable management of natural resources
3. Establishes certificate and university credited courses to train future leaders in field applied, science-based management of natural resources and biodiversity conservation under regions of entrepreneurial activities
4. Provides a mainland link from the Gualaca Altitudinal Corridor to the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor

Project Funding Needs

PROJECT YEAR	PROJECT CONTRIBUTIONS			
	Batipa Foundation		Oteima University	SENACYT
	Built Structures and Existing Assets for Batipa Field Institute Project	Value of Existing Assets		
	600 ha Wildlife Preserve and 2000 ha Mangroves, Land Reserved for Educational Site	\$60,000,000		
	Built Structures (roads, trails, housing)	\$500,000		
Year 1	Research Lab Building (2000 ft2)			\$200,000
	New Academic Courses and Educational Programs		\$150,000	\$100,000
	Institutional support, provider services, market development			\$50,000
	Research Incentive Grants for international and Panamanian scientific collaboration and for matching outside funding contributions and research equipment			\$150,000
Total			\$150,000	\$500,000
YEAR 2	Research Lab Equipment			\$100,000
	New Academic Courses and Educational Programs		\$100,000	
	Scholarships for Panamanian students to study conservation and sustainability (20 scholarships at \$500 each)			\$10,000
	Research Incentive Grants for international and Panamanian scientific collaboration and for matching outside funding contributions and research equipment			\$150,000
Total			\$100,000	\$260,000
YEAR 3	Scholarships for Panamanian students to study conservation and sustainability (20 scholarships at \$500 each)			\$10,000
	New Academic Courses and Educational Programs		\$100,000	
	Research Incentive Grants for international and Panamanian scientific collaboration and for matching outside funding contributions and research equipment			\$230,000
Total			\$100,000	\$240,000
TOTAL 3 year Project Value (\$61,850,000)		\$60,500,000	\$350,000	\$1,000,000
% of Project Value		97.8%	0.6%	1.6%