

East Cauca Valley Water Fund

Preserving water flows for people and nature



Clean, fresh water is the essence of life – for humans, plants, and animals; and livelihoods – from agricultural to industry. Water Funds are an innovative way to *pay for nature's services* – in this case, supplying clean, fresh water – and *reinvest* that money *in conservation* projects that protect nature's ability to provide these services while simultaneously conserving biodiversity and ensuring water quality for urban populations.

The Nature Conservancy, ASOCAÑA (Colombia's sugarcane association), CVC (Corporación Autónoma regional del Valle del

Cauca, the local environmental authority) and nine grassroots organizations **launched the East** Cauca Valley Water Fund in June, 2009.

Money raised by the fund will finance the conservation and restoration of **600 square miles of moist tropical forests and montane grasslands** surrounding ten river basins that provide drinking water to **900,000 people** in the cities of Palmira, El Cerrito, Pradera, Florida and Miranda. These western-Colombian cities are located in the buffer zones of Las Hermosas National Park and several regional protected areas.

This 5-year project is expected to **invest US\$16 million in conservation** activities within the project area, including watershed protection, environmental education, reforestation, and eco-friendly



Two hundred representatives from the Colombian government, industries and grass roots organizations attended the East Cauca Valley Water Fund launching event held in the city of Cali on June 9, 2009. ©Gravitas

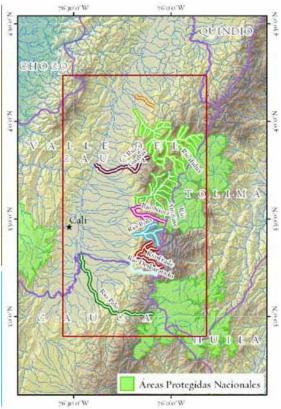
cattle ranching. ASOCAÑA has already committed \$1.6 million for the first three years; CVC has committed one million in just the first year. The Conservancy is contributing \$150,000 through a variety of activities, including:

- applying hydrological models to the project's priority areas
- designing monitoring protocol to verify conservation goals
- fundraising
- providing legal advice on the design and implementation of the water fund
- serving on the Fund's executive board

The 600 square miles that will be benefit from **conservation activities** financed by the fund are:

- Strategic for watershed protection and the water quality of local rivers.
- Essential habitat for many endangered species, including spectacled bears, pumas, tapirs and endemic parrots.
- Necessary for the long-term preservation of the unique biodiversity found in Colombia's tropical forests and montane grasslands.

Conservation activities will improve water quality and flow, decrease the amount of sediments in local rivers, and bring benefits to local communities. Colombia's sugarcane growers' association recognizes the industry's reliance on a continued supply of fresh water for crop cultivation, prompting their support for watershed conservation upstream from where they work. The East Cauca Valley Water Fund will improve the health of watersheds, protect an array of stunning biodiversity and reduce water treatment costs.



The Conservancy has helped establish successful water funds in the Ecuadorean cities of Quito, Cuenca and Zamora, as well as the Colombian capital of Bogotá. Water funds support and finance strategic conservation activities such as:



Sugar cane plantation in the Amaime watershed. © Alejandro Calvache/TNC

- Controlling and monitoring conservation areas;
- Co-financing protected areas management plans;
- Instituting ecofriendly, lowimpact cattle ranching practices;
- Protecting and restoring priority conservation areas, especially in riparian areas;
- Developing regional ecotourism opportunities and activities and park rangers programs;
- Hydrological flow and biodiversity monitoring;
- Educating local students and communities in environmental issues and conservation techniques