



SOUTH NATION  
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## SNC TAKES OVER LEAD ON MEXICAN CONSERVATION EFFORT

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Due in part to previous international collaborations and Spanish language capability, South Nation Conservation has been asked to take over as lead agency on a major Mexican environmental conservation project.

At the request of Conservation Ontario, SNC is joining with Credit Valley Conservation Authority – the previous project lead - and other organizations in trying to improve the quality of water – and life – in Mexico’s 9,800 square-km Ayuquila River Watershed.

Budget for the three-year project is estimated at \$1.8 million. Among other sources of funding through grant applications and in-kind contributions, SNC has applied for a \$500,000 Royal Bank Blue Water Leadership grant and will be notified of the outcome early in June.

Sandra Mancini, SNC Director of Planning and Engineering, noted that CVCA has already helped develop several successful programs including student internships, meetings and seminars with professionals, and the creation of academic courses in watershed management.

One of Mexico’s priority biodiversity conservation regions, Ayuquila watershed provides drinking water to close to 500,000 inhabitants and irrigates more than 30,000 hectares of agricultural land. Among problems in the Ayuquila watershed, Mancini listed pollution from household and industrial waste as well as agricultural activity; excessive grazing and damage done by free-roaming cattle; low potable water availability; wasteful water distribution systems and dysfunctional or non-existent treatment plants; clandestine riparian garbage dumps; deforestation and forest fires.

Among project goals are providing sufficient amounts of safe water for drinking and for agricultural production; implementing new mechanisms for inexpensive water delivery; and establishing effective local institutional techniques for managing the watershed which promote community-based participation. Expediting the effort is the fact that the Intermunicipal Environmental Agency for the Integrated Management of the Lower Ayuquila Watershed has already been created and will now be strengthened.

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