

Brazil Drafts Conservation Plan for Pantanal, a Mankind's Patrimony

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Friday, 06 January 2006

In December, 2005, Brazil's Minister of Environment, Marina Silva, signed an act establishing the Pantanal Biosphere Reserve Management Council, charged with the task of formulating and monitoring an action plan for the reserve.

The document was signed at the opening of the 2nd National Environmental Conference, which took place in Brasília, the Brazilian capital.

In 2000 the Pantanal, which has particular characteristics and species nonextant in other parts of Brazil, was designated a World Biosphere Reserve by the United Nations Education, Science, and Culture Organization (UNESCO).

In the same year UNESCO also declared it part of the Natural Patrimony of Mankind. These two titles came at a critical moment, when various factors were jeopardizing the stability of the ecosystem, which contains the planet's largest flood plain.

According to the Ministry of Environment, the selection of world biosphere reserves depends upon their capacity to accommodate the conservation of biodiversity with the economic utilization of their resources on a sustainable development basis.

The reserves are indicated by UNESCO member states, including Brazil, after a process of consultation and coordination with government agencies, local communities, non-governmental organizations, and private enterprise. And they remain under their country's sovereign jurisdiction.

In the same year in which the Pantanal became a Biosphere Reserve, UNESCO conferred the same title on 20 other sites in 15 countries. The first Brazilian biosphere reserve is the Atlantic Rain Forest, one of the planet's most endangered ecosystems.

The title of Natural Patrimony of Mankind also afforded new prospects for the Pantanal. The title has been important in stimulating the preservation of the region and facilitating access to lines of credit offered by international programs.

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