

Our River Basin

The Sixaola River Basin is a very important basin for many reasons, some already mentioned, is water, is life and destruction, but that destruction that occurs serves to regenerate itself in both nature, and in society in the way of people's thinking regarding a resource, and here, it is the water. The waters of the Sixaola River Basin can bring us good things, bad things, and can bring us new revelations about ourselves by way of how we interact with our waters. Ultimately, it depends on how each resident uses this valuable resource in their daily life. So, for me, personally, the channels of the Sixaola River Basin are unique and not like many other shared rivers basins in the world.



TRIBUTARIES OF THE TELIRE RIVER, BRIBRI TERRITORY, THE SIXAOLA RIVER BASIN

It is river system that is born of a Binational Park, a heritage of humanity. We must take care of all of this river basin. It's birthplace rests in the mountains, and that is guaranteed for life because the two countries, joined with the indigenous territories and decided upon the La Amistad

International Park, which is where the many different rivers of the Sixaola River Basin are born, that eventually become the Sixaola River. The headwaters reside in this International Park and the park is reserved for life by all the basin residents.



THE HEADWATERS OF THE COEN RIVER, ALTO COEN, BRIBRI TERRITORY, TALAMANCA, THE SIXAOLA RIVER BASIN

We are confident that in the future, the Rio (rivers) will remain full of life here, and but this does not mean that we will not have problems – not without erosion problems, there are problems of flooding. Floods here, because it is a *live* river, it is a river that moves as he or she wants, and then can the nearby communities, people and the creatures who are beside the roads, plantations, and banks, and can give us a lot of trouble. But *it* (the river) also gives us the advantage, by gifting us a large resource of water, and nature, that if we care can provide ourselves with other productive inputs such as tourism, such as agriculture, irrigation, water used for hunting fish, other mammals and other ecosystems that river and the basin have, we

benefit from this water immensely. Some community members, our indigenous populations, benefit from the water in a spiritual capacity and they hold their waters sacred, such values that we are eager to learn, and explore further how we might incorporate this into our planning and management initiatives on share water resources. For me it is that, it is a river and a basin that are alive, and is it continually saying: “I am here, beware, because if you do not take care, I will take you with me.”



COOKING "BOBA FISH" AT HE HEADWATERS OF THE COEN RIVER, ALTO COEN, BRIBRI TERRITORY, TALAMANCA, THE SIXAOLA RIVER BASIN

In recent years, we have carried out projects with basin residents, communities, and the populations near the river in the basin, both in the basin above, in the middle, and lower basin, to understand better how to organize, when working in a transboundary basin like this. We have organized a number of groups to protect the watershed, to reforest the banks, to try to prevent contamination of the waters, and that has promoted certain actions for the use of water that have been taken. There are some problems or challenges presented in the Sixaola River Basin countries of

Costa Rica and Panamá, to say that, they wanted some rivers near the basin to be used for dams – hydroelectric. With this, there is a potential that these actions could cause many problems for wildlife, to name one, because it could block the way for species that use the rivers aids to develop.

There were big problems happening a few years back, and remain to the present day. These problems were not located within the basin, but were very close to the basin. UNESCO has worked hard with the two countries and a committee called the International PILE Park La Amistad, to somehow stop all these concepts that aim at building infrastructure or things that can alter the basin and its resources in a negative way. I think that somehow it has been achieved in the case of the Sixaola River Basin.

The basin is protected, the park is protected, but the buffer zones are those are areas that are not readily protected. Here, it depends upon on governments and dams, if they build or do not build near our basin. This is then an iterative process of training and awareness in hydro-diplomacy to try to bring understanding to people where we are in this process today, and tomorrow, and they effect certain infrastructure projects can have on the development of this basin. Here, we always try to have sensitivities and push towards maintaining this basin free of all these sorts of obstacles.

Then water use, it is important that people understand that we must keep the water protected. That's one side. Of course, there are decisions that are very difficult, because it is somehow a contrast between conservation and development, and so far, I believe we have achieved the part of conservation without sacrificing the development.

What we have been learning, is that you can go hand in hand in conservation and development of a basin, with parallel actions that can

conserve the basin, but you can also establish mechanisms or projects that are socio-productive and in line with the sustainability of the basin. These basin projects do not interfere with the development of the channel and basin as such, but that works steadily to supports the health and welfare of the people, and the environment.

To try to improve living conditions in the basin, this is what we all want. These projects are like that, they are socio-productive projects where they are coordinated by organized groups by the same people where they are told: good change a bit of a production model than an extensive model as livestock, but seek integrative models, models of sustainability that can help us with what we have, without destroying the basin to extremes and to provide us with financial resources and other resources – humans, to promote the sustainable development and the holistic management planning of our water resources in *our basin*.

This text in an excerpt from “*Navigating Cultural Currents: The Sixaola River Basin Story*, that can be found here:

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