



# First Asia Parks Congress

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### Sendai, Japan

## National System of Conservation Areas:

*An overview to the Costa Rican protected areas' governance model and some of the main gathered lessons to date*

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# Costa Rica in the world

- **Located in the Americas:**
  - **In the Central American Isthmus**





© Nations Online Project

- ★ Capital City
- Mayor City
- National Border

Lambert Conformal Conic Projection,  
standard parallels 9°N and 17°N

0 100 200 300 Kilometers  
0 100 200 300 Miles

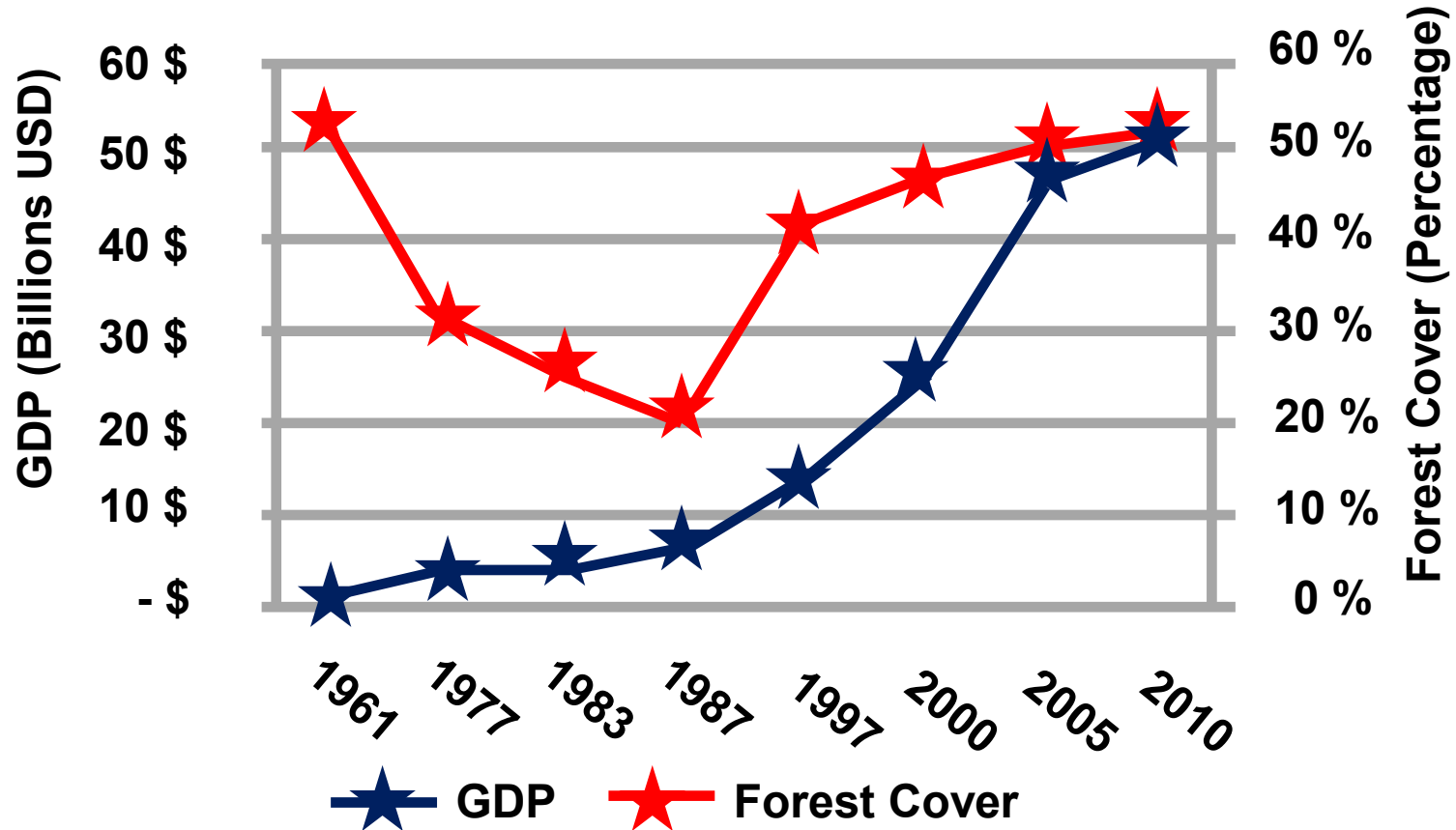
**51100 Km<sup>2</sup>**  
**4.6 million**  
**people**



**COSTA RICA**

# Sustainable development: the Costa Rican model

## Changes in Costa Rican Forest Cover and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (1961 – 2010)

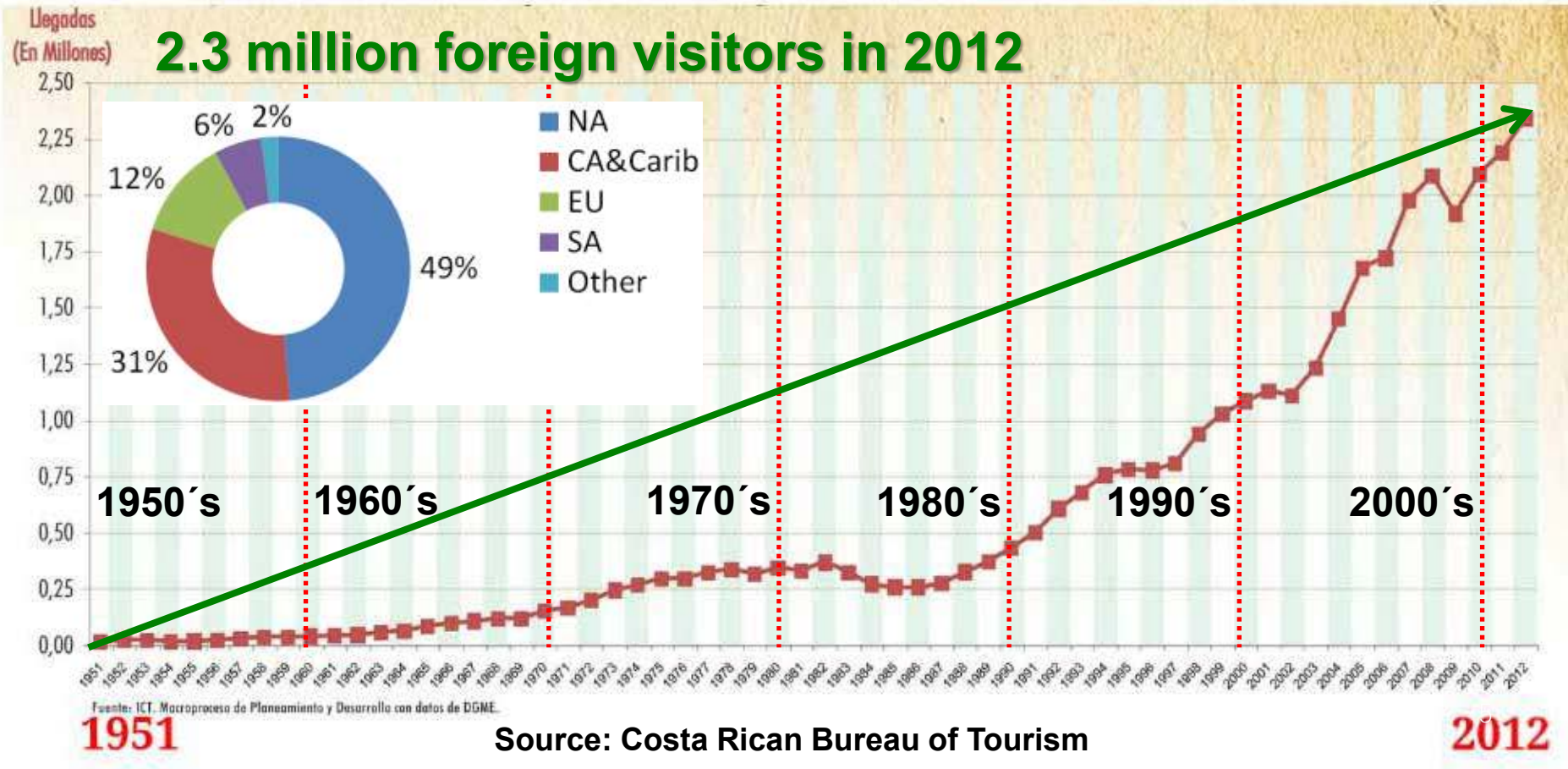


Source: Index Mundi, Nation Master; G. Aguilar, FONAFIFO-MINAE 2011

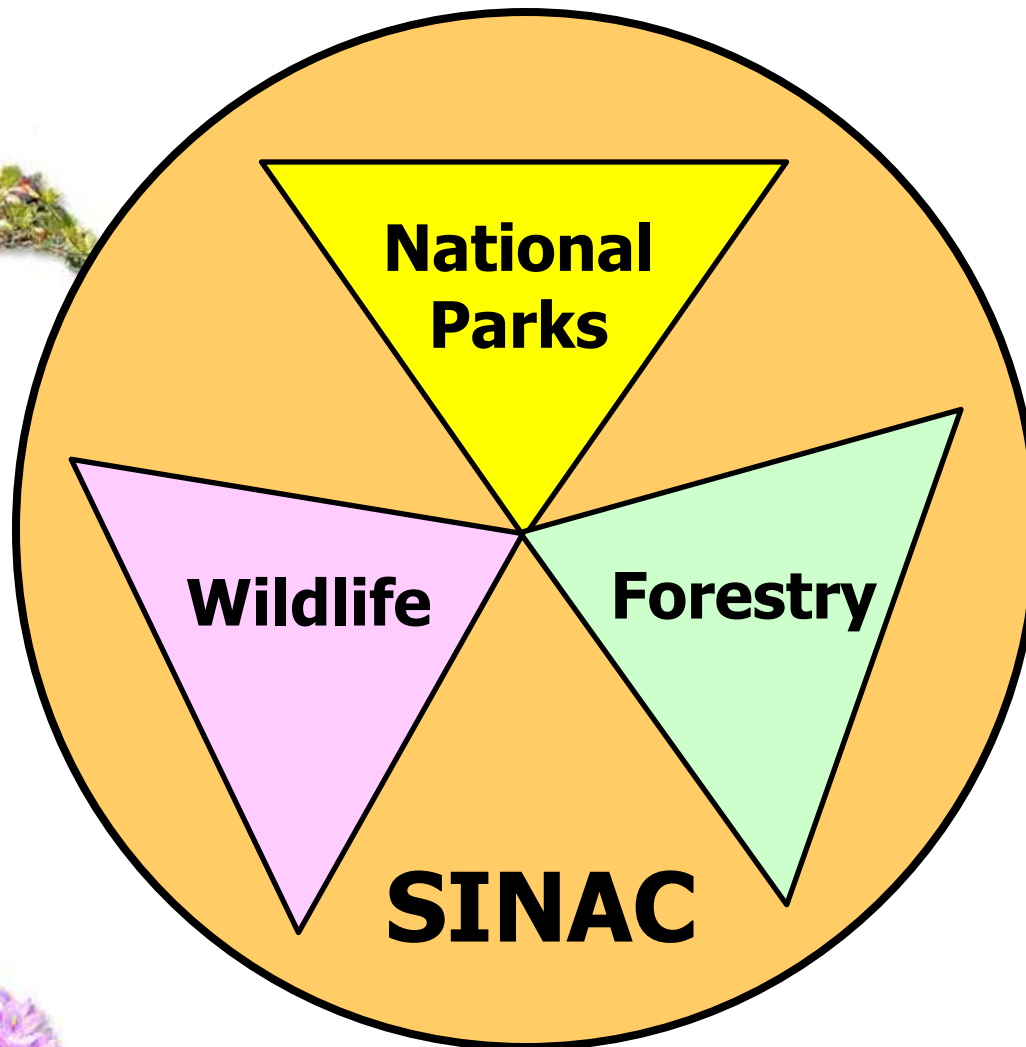


# Sustainable development: the Costa Rican model

## Annual Tourist arrivals to Costa Rica: 1951 – 2012 (Millions)



# The origins of SINAC: unification of agendas



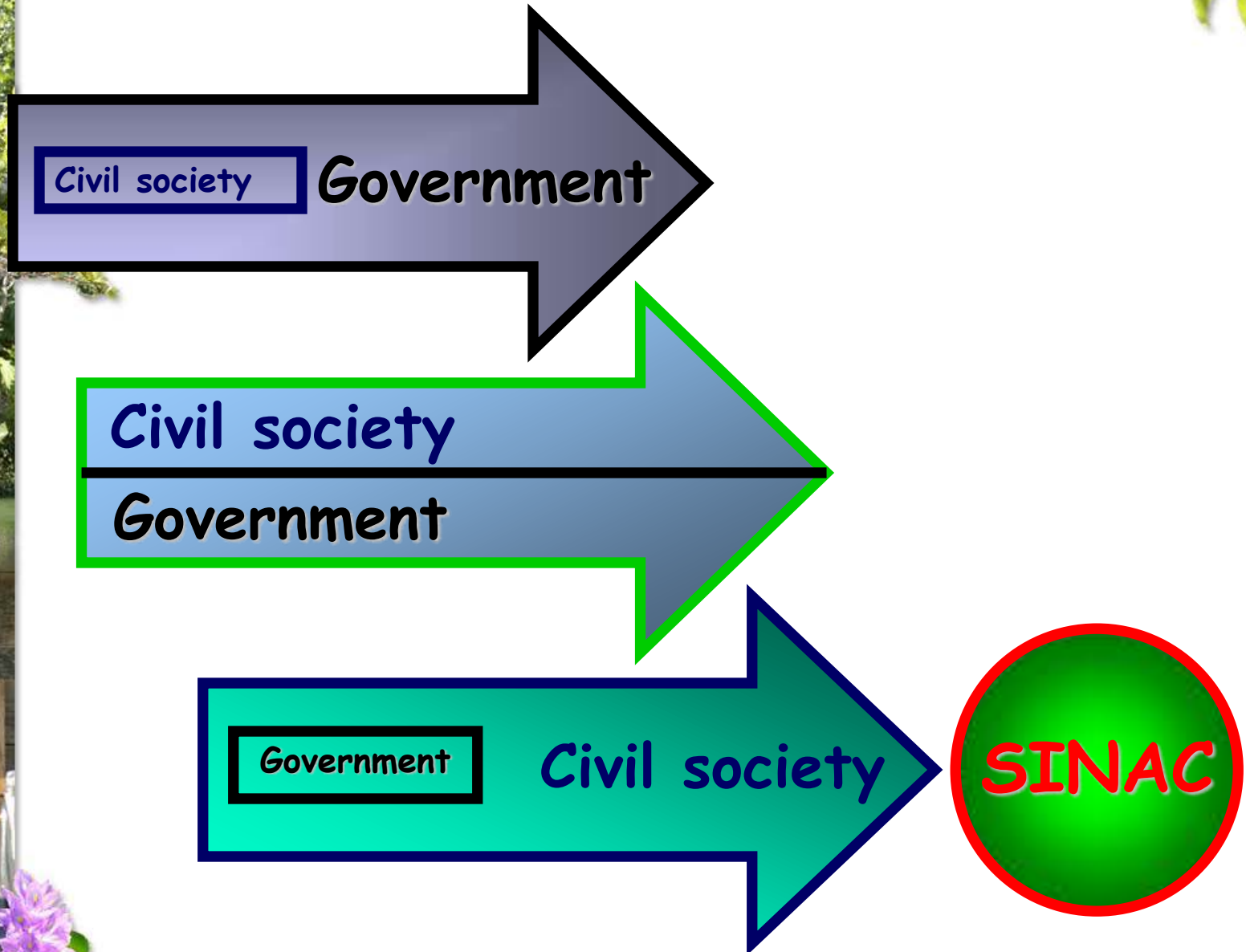
**In 1995, after three decades of conservation efforts...**

**... Costa Rica decided to merge...**

**... the *National Parks, Wildlife and Forestry Services*...**

**... into a unique institution (system)**

# Evolutionary *process* of SINAC: deconcentration and participation



# SINAC – according to the Costa Rican Biodiversity Law

- SINAC is *two different things* at the same time:
  - An **institution** (within the Ministry of Environment and Energy)
  - A **territorial array** (system) for biodiversity conservation







# SINAC – according to the Costa Rican Biodiversity Law

## Organizative Structure

### National Conservation Areas *Council* (CONAC)

- MINISTER (President)
- SINAC Executive Director (Secretary)
- CONAGEBIO Executive Director
- Conservation Areas Directors
- Conservation Areas (Regional) Councils Representatives

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY  
(EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
AND AUXILIAR PERSONNEL)

### Conservation Areas Administrative Structures

- Regional Council
- Regional Direction
- Scientific and Technical  
Committee
- Administrative and Financial  
Body

*Local Councils*

*Regional  
Council*



# What is a *conservation area*?

**It is a *territorial unit* ...**

- **with administrative limits,**
- **ruled by a single development strategy and management policy.**

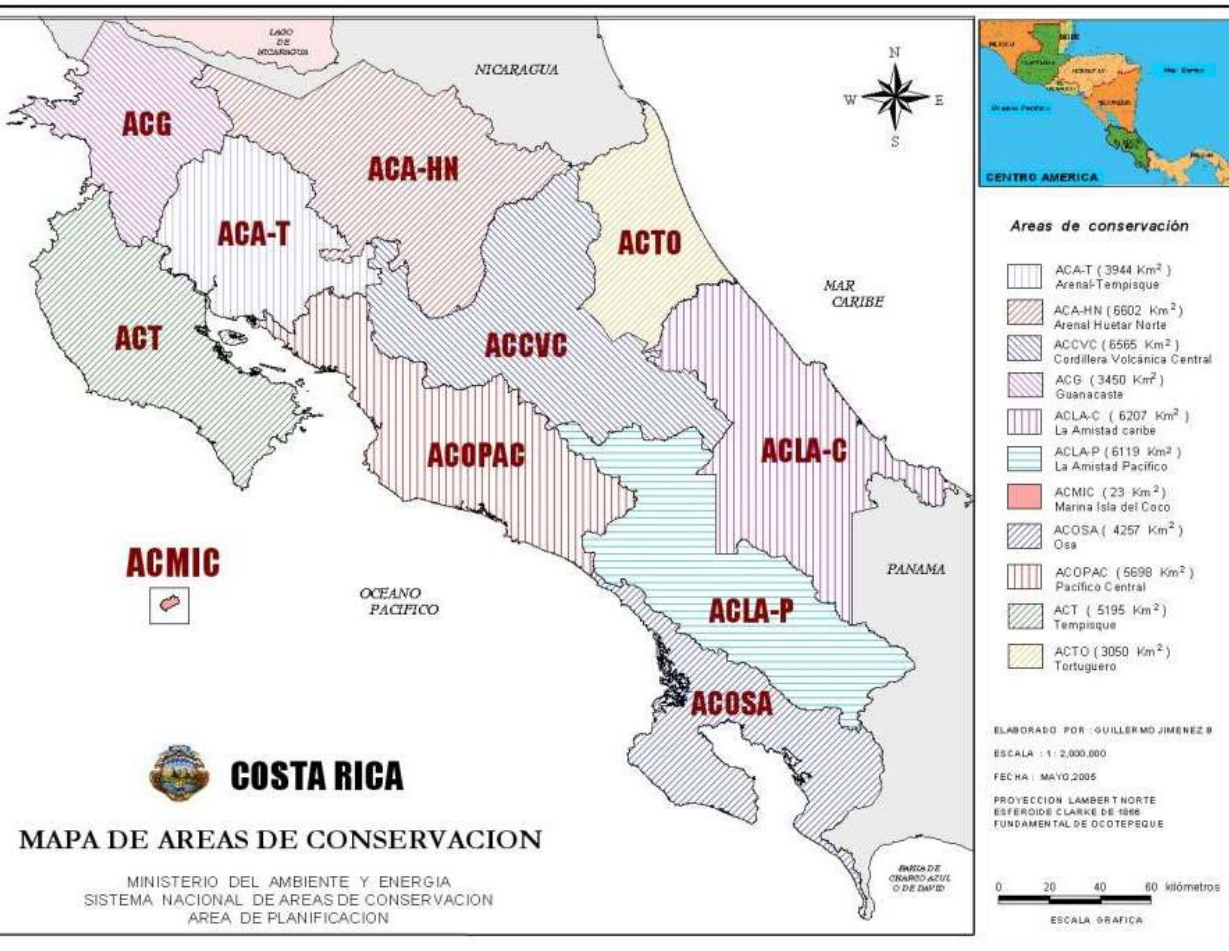
**On it, both *public* and *private* conservation activities interact at the landscape level.**

**It includes...**

- **protected areas,**
- **private farmlands and forests,**
- **villages and cities.**

# SINAC – according to the Costa Rican Biodiversity Law

**11 Conservation Areas, 169 protected areas, 37 proposed biological corridors...**





## Costa Rican protected areas management categories

## IUCN (international) equivalent categories

Biological Reserve
National Park
 <i>Refuge</i> **
Wetland **
Marine Reserve
Protector Zone **
Forestry Reserve **
Managed Marine Area

<b>I A</b>
<b>II</b>
<b>IV</b>
<b>IV</b>
<b>IV</b>
<b>VI</b>
<b>VI</b>
<b>VI</b>

**\*\* *People can live in there***

## Protected areas management categories in Costa Rica



# Governance: from vertical to horizontal decision-making

- *National and Regional Councils* have made SINAC *closer* to local stakeholders: communities, local governments, NGOs, private entrepreneurs...



- These councils are to decide on institutional budget and policies, also approving strategies, plans and so on.



# Governance: from vertical to horizontal decision-making

- *Local Councils* can be created by the *Regional Councils* for...
  - ... watersheds management purposes,...
  - ... protected areas management,...
  - ... biological corridors management, etc.



# Participatory management of Barra del Colorado National Wildlife Refuge

## (Tortuguero Conservation Area, ACTo)



**Figura 2**  
**Área de Conservación Tortuguero**  
 Plan de Manejo P. N. Tortuguero

### Simbología

- Carreteras principales
- Poblados principales
- ACTo**
- P. N. TORTUGUERO
- P. N. TORTUGUERO (AREA MARINA)
- Z. P. TORTUGUERO
- Z. P. ACUIFEROS GUACIMO Y POCOCI
- HUMEDAL NACIONAL CARIARI
- R. V. S. ARCHIE CARR
- R. V. S. BARRA DEL COLORADO
- CORREDOR FRONTERIZO
- NO PROTEGIDO
- Otras ASP y Areas de Conservación

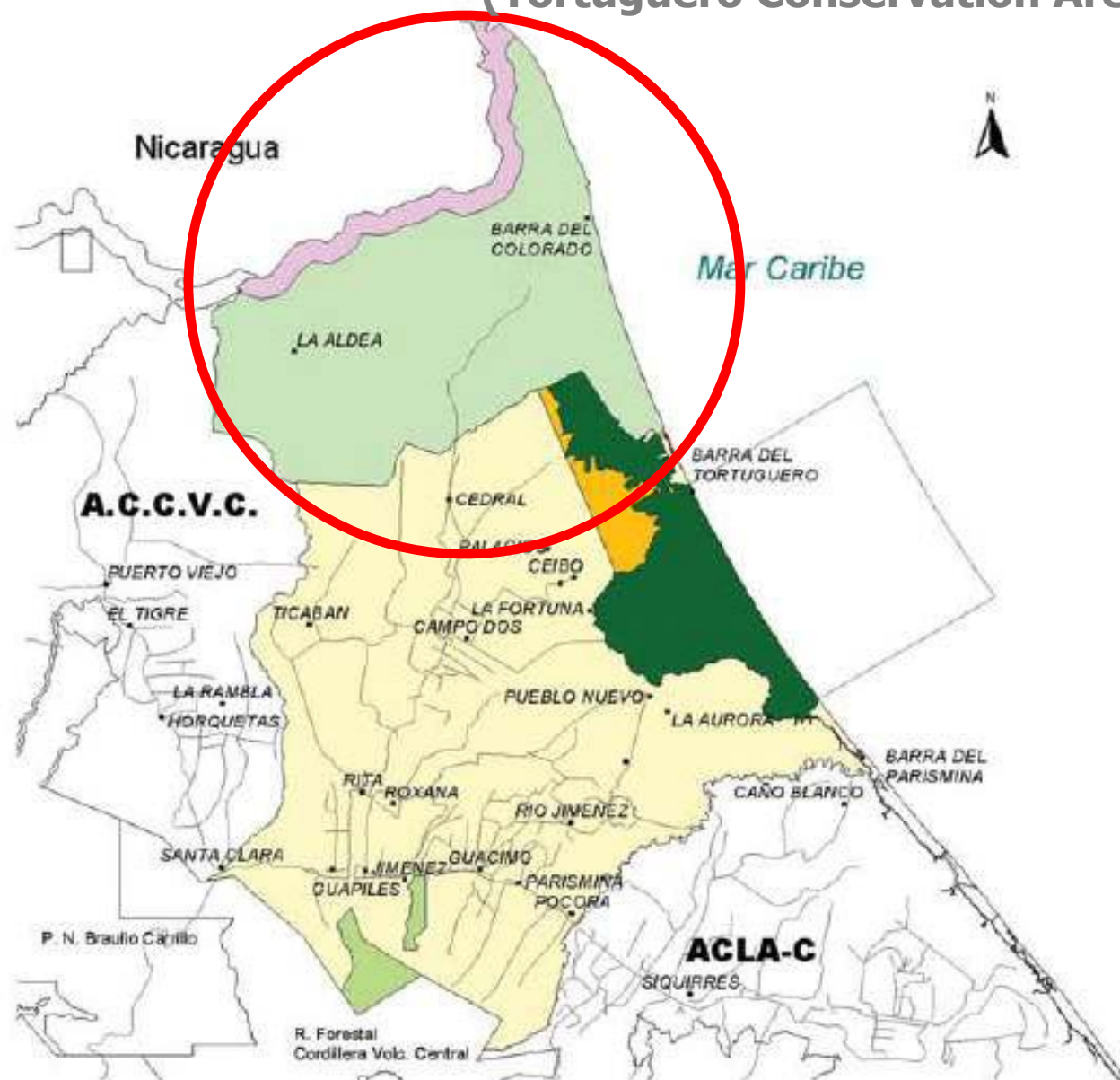


Ubicación del Parque Nacional Tortuguero en Costa Rica



Elaborado por: Miguel Ballesteros  
 Fuente: Definición del límite a partir de la interpretación de los decretos de creación.  
 Datos digitales de Areas Silvestres Protegidas y Corredores Biológicos del

Fecha: Marzo, 2003  
 Proyección: Lambert Norte para Costa Rica  
 Financiado por: Proyecto COBODE



# Participatory management of Barra del Colorado National Wildlife Refuge

(Tortuguero Conservation Area, ACTo)



But! What is participatory management?

Local actors



Make some decisions



Conservation objectives





# Project Results



1. The officials of ACTo are able to implement actions of environmental education in the Refuge.

**Objectives verifiable**



**Material Manual Plan**

**Environmental education activities  
with local people.**



2. The officials of ACTo have to facilitate the producers to benefits and service of the biodiversity in a sustainable form.

**Objectives verifiable**



**Producers Manual  
satisfied.**

**Training in integrated farms.**

**Supplementary training workshops.**

**Monitoring visits.**



# Project Results

3. Improve the system of collaborative work between officials of ACTo, the inhabitants and related institutions for the participatory management.

Objectives verifiable



Local actor  
Collaborative.



manuals

Manuals of Local council , participatory monitoring and environmental monitoring.  
Work together with local stakeholders.





## Concluding remarks

- After 15 years, SINAC is still a model under construction.
- Participatory decision-making processes are rather complex and require permanent capacity-building efforts.
- A deconcentrated operative structure must be continuously adjusted to fulfill both effectiveness and efficiency criteria.
- Empowerment of local stakeholders leads to improved public awareness and participation.

# Concluding remarks

- Fragmented ecosystems, small-sized protected areas and intensive use of the land are between the reasons to foster a territorial model like SINAC.
- But without a national (intersectorial) territorial plan, SINAC will not make the best in sustainably managing the ecosystems services.
- JICA´s project at Barra del Colorado Refuge has shown good results along a short time-period, thus giving hope to future participatory processes.



***Thank you so much...***



***<http://www.sinac.go.cr>***

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