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# Best Practices Database

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## Activities that Promote Conservation Policies and Protect the Environment *Panama*

Best Practice

New for 2002

### Categories:

- Environmental Management:
- ecological sustainability
  - environmental health
  - environmental remediation
  - monitoring and control
  - resource management
  - urban greening
- Land Use Management:
- land development
  - land-use planning
  - open space conservation

**Level of Activity:** Regional (international)

**Ecosystem:** Tropical/Sub-Tropical

### Summary

ANCON was created to protect and conserve the natural resources of the Republic of Panama. This organization is a private non-profit association that includes among its personnel biologists, zoologists, ecologists, geographers, botanists, forestry engineers, data and general management professionals who dedicate their intellectual efforts, capacities and skills in accomplishing the association's objectives. To ensure this commitment, ANCON has promoted the creation of policies and programs oriented to environmental protection and community education. The mission of ANCON also includes identifying sensitive areas, cataloguing the existing flora and fauna, preventing deforestation practices, and educating communities in sustainable activities.

ANCON has accomplished far beyond its original mission including but not limited to the following:

1. The protection and conservation of 2,200,000 acres of threatened ecosystem and species.
2. The creation of natural preservation and conservation sanctuaries such as the Soberania National Park, the Chagres National Park, Darien, Bastimentos Marine National Park, and La Amistad (Friendship) International Park.
3. The purchase of environmentally sensitive areas to include Falconett Property, Punta Patino Natural Reserve, Rio Cabuya Agroforestry, La Pintada Agroforestry, Persenico Agroforestry, and Boca del Drago Agroforestry.
4. The creation of a Natural Preservation Reserve/Historical Monument in the hub of Panama City, the Cerro Ancon Nature Reserve, and the Ancon Hill Environmental Interactive Center. ANCON has reached its goal of optimum community participation by enrolling more than 3,000 volunteers involved in the projects' conservation efforts

## Narrative

### Situation before the initiative began

In the early 80's, Panama faced the challenge of protecting its extraordinary natural heritage. At the time, there existed an accelerated deforestation and destruction of the tropical rainforest that threatened the vital natural resources that were the foundation for the future growth, development and stability of the country.

### Establishment of Priorities

Mr. Navarro and the Board of Trustees of ANCON established the priorities based on the needs of the existing situation. They established protection and conservation policies and created an organizational structure that was responsible for overseeing the application of policies and procedures. Simultaneously, programs were created to generate environmental awareness in the community. At the onset, ANCON conducted several field studies, including the strategic analysis of needs and resources, to diagnose the nation's ecosystems and to evaluate the existing environmental legislation. By discerning and evaluating the environment areas in danger and the general population's attitude about their surroundings, the organization was able to target their efforts in the necessary directions.

### Formulation of Objectives and Strategies

The main objective of ANCON was to become a bastion in the environmental arena by obtaining accurate environmental information, developing aggressive conservation and funding projects, and implementing strategies that included the participation of the community at large. To this end the main objectives were:

1. Promoting protection and conservation policies in the country.
2. Cataloguing and protecting the existing flora and fauna.
3. Establishing protected areas along the country.
4. Creating educational programs for the community.
5. Educating and assisting communities in the development of sustainability programs.
6. Involving people in conservation efforts.

### Mobilization of Resources

Mr. Navarro initiated an aggressive campaign for obtaining local and international funding. His initiatives included lobbying for local and international donations and corporate memberships. He created several successful programs to raise the necessary funding and attract the community to participate in conservation efforts, which included, but not limited, to the following:

1. "Adopt an Acre"
2. Visa Ancon Credit Card Program
3. "Friends of Ancon"

In addition Mr. Navarro recruited a staff of leading professionals from many fields interested in conservation and research. ANCON works to create conservation awareness by organizing and coordinating volunteer programs that successfully include more than 3,000 participants. Through efficient communication programs, the organization has successfully generated the awareness and the need for community participation in the importance of environmental protection and conservation.

### Process

The main problem in promoting conservation and protection of the environment was the lack of legislation governing the same. Ancon played an important role in establishing a mechanism that provided the required regulation and at the same time assisted and educated the government and the community in understanding the vital importance and urgency of providing environmental protection.

It was imperative to obtain financial support for implementing the programs. Through ambitious strategic programs, Mr. Navarro and ANCON led the public opinion and contacted local and international organizations for the necessary funding. They also create a volunteer program, published articles, edited magazines, made conferences and videos to educate people in conservation.

In order to ensure the appropriate establishment and regulation of conservation programs, Mr. Navarro participated as the Secretary of the Board of Director of the National Environmental Authority. Said entity was responsible for providing the views of the environmentalist groups to the federal governmental. He also served as a Regional Advisor at the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (UICN) garnishing the distinction of becoming the first Panamanian member as well as the youngest ever to serve at the UICN. Through Mr. Navarro's involvement with the UICN, the Panamanian conservation problems were brought to an international level.

The natural progression and significant involvement of Mr. Navarro with ANCON could be explained in four phases:

The first phase was the creation process. From 1985 to 1987, Ancon opened its office with barely two employees and immediately began efforts to raise funds for the Soberania National Park.

During the second phase, Ancon initiated its political networking with the central government though the INRENARE which resulted in the creation of the Chagres and Darien National Parks. ANCON also created the La Amistad National Park and the Bastimento Island Marine Park. It is noteworthy to mention that during this phase the country of Panama was in deep political turmoil which affected but did not deter the conservation strategies that Mr. Navarro and the association had set out to accomplish.

Following this phase, Ancon began an aggressive marketing campaign to educate the local and international community on the importance of natural conservation and preservation in the Republic of Panama. By the 1990's, Ancon had become an established and well-respected conservation agency. The organization produced a profound impact on governmental policies and in the international view of Panama as an ecological sanctuary for endangered species and for its richness in tropical flora and fauna.

In the new millennium Mr. Navarro left ANCON to begin his tenure as Mayor of the Municipality of Panama City. His intentions were to transfer his learned experiences in the conservation field to the community development. Navarro knows that both topics are related because people growing and community development are deeply related to the ecological system. Protection of the environment means protection of life and endurance of Panama's future.

## Results Achieved

During his 15-years of involvement with ANCON, Mr. Navarro has accomplished a myriad of projects to include the following::

1. Soberania National Park,
2. The Chagres National Park,
3. Darien National Park and Mining Reserve.
4. Bastimentos Marine National Park,
5. La Amistad International Park.

Ancon has purchased environmentally sensitive areas, such as: Falconett Property, Punta Patino Natural Reserve, Rio Cabuya Agroforestry, La Pintada Agroforestry, Persenico Agroforestry, Boca del Drago Agroforestry, Natural Preserve/Historical Monument in the middle of Panama City, The Cerro Ancon Nature Reserve, The Ancon Hill Environmental Interactive Center.

The citizens and community conscience about protection and conservation of the environment has increased with the following measures taken to sensitise community members on environmental

conservation:

1. Ancon's Magazine and Icaro Magazine
2. The International Center for Environmental Education.
3. Several laws devoted to the environment protection and conservation.

Most of the results are described in the book National Parks of Panama written by Juan Carlos Navarro.

### Sustainability

Financial: Ancon has been very creative designing many ways for getting funds. Among others, Ancon has used credit card programs, donation strategies such as "Adopt an Acre", the program "Ancon's Friends", international and local funding programs, and private sectors donations.

Social and Economic: Through conservation policies people have learned new and innovative ways to relate to nature and new forms of natural productive protection systems. People are trained for new jobs and activities in the areas close to the protected zones.

Cultural: The educational programs have created an increased awareness of the growing need to protect the environment and have encouraged the citizens to get actively involved in conservation efforts. Ancon also operates a specialized center to teach people about conservation. It is called the International Center for Environmental Instruction.

Environmental: The creation of many parks and protected areas has had a direct impact on the ecological systems and the general environment. The deforestation has been diminished and the flora and fauna have been given a new opportunity to continue.

### Lessons Learned

The most important learned lessons are

- a) The conservation and protection of nature can be done through strategic and aggressive programs. Starting in the middle of the deforestation problem, ANCON generated comprehensive programs that put together financial resources, professionals, citizens, and organizations in conservation and protection programs. Conservation awareness is a key ingredient to include people in environment protection efforts and leadership should be done so people can be led to new attitudes and behavior regarding the relation between man and his surroundings.
- b) Government and private sectors can participate together to protect national main resources and to ensure the future of the communities. The implementation and regulation of conservation legislation became a reality thanks to the efforts the private sectors led by Ancon.
- c) People can be involved in efforts to protect and conserve nature. Through its volunteer programs and strategic funding programs, ANCON made it possible for people to participate in the conservation efforts. The organization also made people aware of the common responsibilities that the community shares in protecting the environment. The International Center for Environmental Education plays a key role in helping people and communities in developing new practices and protecting the environment.

### Transferability

There is evidence that supports the continuing learning process by the community with regard to conservation and preservation methods and programs. Probably the most important evidence is the awareness of the need to protect the environment and the creation of private efforts to reforest affected areas of the country. It is also significant to mention the efforts to promote legislative regulation to protect and conserve the environment.

## Key Dates

1985-1986 Creation of ANCON (National Association for the Conservancy of Nature).

Demarcation, protection and support of the Soberania National Park

1987-1988 Cooperation Agreement between ANCON and the ANAM (National Environmental Authority).

Demarcation for Darien and Chagres National Parks

The Conservation Data Center was created.

La Amistad National Park and Bastimento Marine Island Park were established

1990-1992 Several environmental projects including the Education Program in Environment to foster job creation

1993-1994 The Volunteer Programs were initiated.

Ancon Magazine was published.

1995-1997 Punta Patino Private Natural Reserve and San Telmo Island Natural Reserve were created.

Government legislation establishing the Darien National Park Mining Reserve and an agreement between Panama and Colombia for frontier protection.

1999 International Center for Environmental Education was created

## References

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2. Chagres National Park. ICARO Magazine, No. 4, August, 2001. 46-47.
3. Reforestation. ICARO Magazine, No.4, August 2000, 30-32.
4. La Amistad International Park, ICARO Magazine, No.3, Mayo, 2001.
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7. Volunteers in Action. Ancon Magazine, Vol 6, No. 1, 1999, 9-15.
8. Panama Annual Environmental Inform. National Authority for the Environment, 1999. Panama.
9. Ecological Assesment of the Biological Corridor Proposition, Gualaca, Chiriqui, Panama, 1999.
10. Ecological Survey of the U.S. Department of Defense Lands in Panama, Ancon, Panama, 1999.

## Contact

Mr. Ricardo Laviery  
Municipality of Panama (Municipio de Panama}  
10th Street, San Felipe  
Panama City,  
Republic of Panama

Tel: (507) 262-1866

Fax: (507) 262-4966

E-mail:Alcalde@municipio.gob.pa

**Type of Organization:** Local Authority

## Nominating Organization

Same as above

## Partners

National Association for the Conservation of Nature (ANCON)

Jessica Yee

ANCON

Alberto Navarro Street, El Cangrejo,

P.O.Box 1387

Zone 1

Panama City, Republic of Panama.

Tel: (507) 264-8100, (507) 263-7950;

Fax: (507) 264-1836

E-mail: [ancon@ancon.org](mailto:ancon@ancon.org)

**Type of Organization:** Non-governmental organisation (NGO)

**Type of Partner Support:** Financial Support

## Financial Profile

Year	Total Budget (US\$)	Partner B (% of the budget)
1999	Over 3,000,000	ANCON
2000	Over 3,000,000	ANCON
2001	Over 3,000,000	ANCON
2002	Over 3,000,000	ANCON

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