

Project Update: July 2007

Work started in February 2007 when the grant was approved, unfortunately the funds were not available until late May because of delays in the administrative process at the University. Work shows substantial advance in three different areas. First, a television program was done in collaboration with the state of Michoacan public television. In part because of the grant awarded by the Foundation, the need to raise awareness about the Mintzita wetland complex was recognized and a 1 hr program was authorized within the TV series "Regresando a la Naturaleza". The program has been broadcasted three times since it was finished in May. Materials to work with local schools are almost ready for printing, being currently revised by experts in environmental education. Through the extension department of the University, the director of environmental education at the state Secretariat of Education has been contacted to incorporate talks and activities about the Mintzita wetland complex with basic education students (5th and 6th grades). Work with local schools will start in September when courses start after the summer break. Activities will start with three schools in the immediate vicinity of the Mintzita wetland complex and will continue to cover as much schools as possible in the city of Morelia.

The Mintzita wetland complex is surrounded by communal lands owned by the ejido San Nicolas Obispo. As such, conservation of the wetlands and the springs depends on collaboration with the ejido authorities and the member of the ejido. Two meetings have been held, one with the authorities and one open to all the people of the ejido. An agreement has been reached to include the Mintzita wetland system as a communal protected area and as such it will be included in the Communal Management Plan for the ejido that is under preparation by the ejido authorities and the University. This represents a major step towards long term preservation of the wetlands and springs since other efforts by state and federal agencies failed to gain support from the ejido. Once the area is included as protected in the management plan of the community, it can be declared a state protected natural preserve by request of the ejido. Additional meetings will be held to prepare a management plan for the wetlands and spring with the main goal of its preservation and with the aim of allowing low impact activities.

Field work has advanced as planned. Sampling of vegetation after an accidental fire in early February that was started by farmers allowed us to illustrate the damage that this type of events cause to the vegetation. Data gathered in the last three years have shown that fire is beneficial if not too frequent, and this data will be useful for the implementation of a fire control program in collaboration with the ejido. Demonstrative plots have been set-up as proposed and additional plots will be prepared as the rainy season advances.



Left: Cameraman at the wetland. Right: Effects of fire.



Setting-up the demonstrative plots