

Project Green Challenge 2023 – Day 5 Greener Category

Los Aprendices – Conrado Manuel Guzmán Flores, Conradof, (ASU Masters in Sustainability Leadership Program), Mexico City.

Describe the issue.

My issue for today's challenge is not found in the Environmental Justice Atlas yet. It's about the illegal logging of the Bosque de Agua that borders Mexico City to the west and south and stretches into the neighboring State of Mexico and State of Morelos. Bosque de Agua as its name indicates, it's the most important source of water for Mexico City, the City of Toluca, and the city of Cuernavaca, and the hundreds of towns and villages in it and around it. It catches water from the rain and the snow that sometimes falls (unlike the past) in its peaks that surpass the 3,000 meters above sea level. This Bosque de Agua is home to spectacular mixed high altitude subtropical forests composed primarily of fir, pine, and oak.

Bosque de Agua has been diminishing its size over the last decades to give room to urban sprawl and despite being so close to Mexico City, it witnesses constant illegal logging promoted by developers and corrupt authorities who benefit from real estate that markets the privilege of living far away from the polluted and populated city below. Activists who fight to preserve Bosque de Agua have been assassinated, and despite many efforts by a multitude of organizations, the issue keeps growing and endangers the life of its inhabitants and visitors.

Who is it impacting most?

Bosque de Agua's inhabitants are impacted the most. In Mexico there is a type of land property called Ejido that was developed after the Revolution a century ago whose purpose is to return the land to the campesinos. People who live in the Ejido are called Ejidatarios and have a semi-autonomous form of government, some are Indigenous peoples. Ejidatarios of Bosque de Agua keep fighting illegal logging and urban sprawl. But some other Ejidatarios are part of the illegal logging and sell their land to developers, a situation that they take to their advantage by further dividing the communities in Bosque de Agua. Ejidatarios who fight for Bosque de Agua have seen their activists' members assassinated or put in jail.

How close to where you live is this injustice occurring?

Bosque de Agua is 32 km west of where I live. Some Ejidatarios have turned their land into protected areas and natural parks where thousands visit every weekend for recreational hiking and to escape the city. It's my favorite place to go hiking.

Is any local government or organization working to intervene?

In 2012 a joint strategy to conserve the Bosque de Agua was presented by many local and national NGO's to the federal government, but no action was executed. Several organizations, including universities and the Ejidos themselves are constantly working to make authorities intervene. It's an ongoing battle.

If the solution were up to you, how would you approach it? Consider referencing the above-mentioned environmental justice principles.

This is a complex issue where many actors are involved and in relation to intersectionality, it's understandable that some of the people in this poor Ejidos make a quick gain by selling their land and logging in favor of developers. However, education and a call to action is key among the thousands of visitors the Bosque de Agua has every weekend. Visitors need to call, send letters, demand action, and do public demonstrations to pressure authorities to intervene. All the organizations that promote the conservation of Bosque de Agua need to rally together and join efforts to demand action and protection. Universities in Mexico City are key thanks to their research and relation to government.

Post: https://www.instagram.com/gfconrad/?img_index=1



Dear María Luisa Albores: For the future of Mexico City and its surroundings we only ask that SEMARNAT and CONANP to execute the Rule of Law and decree the Bosque de Agua once and for all as a Natural Protected Area. I know you're conscious of its value that transcends our lives and that it has witnessed so many generations. Do the right thing.

