

Conservation



Conservation of natural and cultural resources is one of the most important global long-term goals of the coming century. Yet, efforts to accomplish this have often led to the compromise of important short-term needs at regional and local levels. A model conservation program must balance short-term with long-term objectives to attain a sustainable framework for resource management. This involves the development of effective links not only internationally, but on the community level to ensure region-wide integrity of the Maya forest.

The El Pilar Program has the potential to evolve a unique conservation design that incorporates local community needs, government development agenda, and international environmental concerns. This can best be accomplished by a collaborative consortium of individuals with direct experience in the Maya forest region. Coordinating the involvement of professionals in natural and cultural resource conservation is essential for the development of informed management schemes. These schemes must recognize the innate knowledge within the local communities. Local leaders are repositories of wisdom in the natural and cultural realms which they fully recognize as a diverse resource bank that requires nurturing.

Conservation impacts the contemporary traditions of the local communities, the archaeology of the monuments and houses, and the Maya forest itself. Increasing the knowledge and visibility in traditions of oral histories, dance, and crafts requires local community investment as well as national and regional support. Conserving the Maya monuments at El Pilar requires knowledge, skill and vision. Well planned and executed programs for ancient building consolidation that assures long-term maintenance can create a lasting educational environment for all visitors. Promoting biodiversity along corridors

within the Maya forest will be only as effective as the intervening links found among the people of the area. Education in resource conservation and integrated resource management is key to sustaining the forest biodiversity.

The core of the El Pilar Program objectives is to sustain the complex habitats of the Maya forest and to preserve the irreplaceable cultural resources of the ancient and contemporary populations of the region. Community involvement in preserving traditions is critical to the success of conservation management. The program needs to promote ecological biodiversity and sustainable development in order to conserve and enhance the contemporary landscape of the Maya forest.