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# NATURAL WEALTH

## OBJECTIVE

Despite its relatively small size, Colombia is the second most biodiverse country on Earth, home to approximately 10 percent of the world's species. USAID's Natural Wealth activity began at a critical time with the Colombian government's unprecedented commitment to conserve the country's globally significant, and locally important, biodiversity, while pursuing rural development goals in the context of a historic peace accord.

Natural Wealth supports the Government of Colombia (GOC) in making important advances in the preservation of the country's biodiversity on the Caribbean region in the tropical dry forest, and in the grasslands and freshwater ecosystems in the eastern plains of the Orinoquia region. Tropical dry forests are one of the most threatened ecosystems in the world. In Colombia, only eight percent of the total original area remains. Out of this, only five percent of the area is protected under the protected area system. Grasslands and freshwater ecosystems in the Orinoquia, which are the eastern plains of Colombia, cover 17 million hectares, or 30 percent of Colombia's territory. These ecosystems require improved protection, and only a few currently exist (i.e., one national protected area and a few regional/local protected areas and private reserves). This covers less than four percent of the region's area.

As peace implementation begins, the Orinoquia is looked to as the next agricultural frontier for Colombia. Prioritization is given to agroindustry development (e.g., palm oil, soy, rice), in addition to the necessary infrastructure expansion to support it.

USAID's Natural Wealth activity is implemented by Chemonics and runs from March 2017 – March 2022 in the departments of Bolívar, Sucre, Cesar, La Guajira, Casanare, and Vichada.

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## COMPONENTS

### EFFECTIVE PROTECTION OF PRIORITY ECOSYSTEMS AND SPECIES

To increase the land area under legal protection, Natural Wealth will employ a two-pronged approach. The program will: 1) work to strengthen the management of existing, and new national and regional protected areas; and 2) enhance protection through sound, accountable land management by indigenous groups, communities, and the Civil Society Nature Reserves.

### DEVELOP FINANCIAL INCENTIVES FOR CONSERVATION

Natural Wealth will support Colombia's green growth strategy, which includes best management practices in the agricultural sector and development of sustainable economic opportunities to complement efforts to enhance biodiversity conservation. The program will address the most prevalent barriers to private sector and producer involvement, prioritizing the activities with the largest return on investment in terms of the protection of biologically significant hectares.

### LAND-USE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT TO REDUCE THREATS TO BIODIVERSITY

Natural Wealth will focus efforts at the municipal and regional levels to more effectively strengthen and operationalize national-level land use, and sustainable development and conservation policies on the ground. The program will strengthen the environmental governance capacity of local and regional authorities, and improve access to better information on threats to biodiversity, conservation, and habitat loss in order to establish conservation priorities and evaluate development options and tradeoffs.

## EXPECTED RESULTS

- Improve natural resource management of 1,076,000 hectares, with 34 percent of this area under legal protection.
- Provide sustainable natural resources management and/or biodiversity conservation training for 6,000 people.
- Leverage and mobilize USD \$18 million for biodiversity conservation from public and private sources.
- Increase economic benefits for 4,000 people through activities contributing to biodiversity conservation.
- Present, adopt or implement 75 laws, policies, strategies, plans, or regulations supporting biodiversity.