



**Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute**  
**Instituto Smithsonian de Investigaciones Tropicales**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Smithsonian Coordinates Management Planning for Panama's Coiba National Park and World Heritage Site**

**Developing new models for scientifically-informed conservation of tropical forest and coral reef habitats**

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On May 17<sup>th</sup> the United Nations Education, Science and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) signed a contract authorizing funding for the Smithsonian Institution to implement the project: "Promoting Marine Conservation in a World Heritage Site in the Tropical Eastern Pacific," the revision and updating of the management plan for Panama's Coiba National Park and Special Marine Protection Zone. This multi-institutional project is coordinated by Conservation International (CI), the United Nations Foundation (UNF) and UNESCO's World Heritage Center.

The Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI) will direct the process of revision and updating of the current plan, which was originally prepared by the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation (AECI) in 1996. Over the next 18 months a process will be implemented to develop a realistic, updated, modular management plan and contribute to the efficient and integrated management of this protected area while promoting improved quality of life for residents of areas within the zone of influence of the park.

The Coiba planning team, at the request of Panama's National Environmental Authority (ANAM), is composed of professional Panamanians who provide expertise in diverse areas such as protected area planning, geographic information systems, terrestrial, marine and fisheries biology, law, architecture and civil engineering. Law 44 passed on the 26th of June, 2004, which creates the Park, stipulates that the team will work closely with ANAM, which manages park operations, and the Panama Maritime Authority which manages the Special Marine Protected Zone in the Park.

Coiba National Park forms part of the Eastern Pacific Marine Conservation Corridor composed of the Galapagos Islands (Ecuador), the Cocos Islands (Costa Rica), and Mapelo and Gorgona Islands (Colombia). The Galapagos and Cocos Islands are also UNESCO World Heritage Sites. These five protected areas have established a group of experts in ecotourism and natural areas planning who will provide support in kind to Coiba National Park. Ecotourism specialists will contribute to the development of a Plan for Public Use. In this sense, Coiba will be a pilot project for the implementation of a planning project for other World Heritage sites in Central America.

On July 14, 2005, UNESCO's World Heritage Site Committee approved the Republic of Panama's request to declare Coiba National Park a World Heritage Site. This decision not only recognizes efforts on the part of Panama's civil society, government institutions and non-governmental organizations who worked to give the area National Park status under Law 44, but also underscores an international commitment to conserve the biological, historical and cultural treasures of this protected area.

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Coalition for Coiba contact information

[http://www.coiba.net/display?layer=ngo&content=cont\\_ngo\\_image&lang=ENG](http://www.coiba.net/display?layer=ngo&content=cont_ngo_image&lang=ENG)

Albatros Media [www.albatrosmedia.net](http://www.albatrosmedia.net)

Autoridad Nacional del Medioambiente [www.anam.gob.pa](http://www.anam.gob.pa)

STRI [www.stri.org](http://www.stri.org)

Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution [www.whoi.edu](http://www.whoi.edu)

Conservation International [www.conservation.org](http://www.conservation.org)

The Nature Conservancy [www.tnc.org](http://www.tnc.org)

MARVIVA [www.marviva.net](http://www.marviva.net)

AVINA [www.avina.net](http://www.avina.net)

ANCON [www.ancon.org](http://www.ancon.org)

Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional [www.aeci.org](http://www.aeci.org)

Liquid Jungle Lab [www.liquidjunglelab.com](http://www.liquidjunglelab.com)

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