

NEWS FROM HONDURAS

Honduras Community Support Corporation

November 2006

Helping rural Hondurans to live better on the land
and to protect the land they live on

Watershed Holdings Expanding

FECOVESO, (Fundacion Eco Verde Sostenible), the local nonprofit land trust organized and supported through the efforts of HCSC, has had a busy year. In addition to the six parcels transferred at the beginning of the year, HCSC funded FECOVESO's acquisition of watershed parcels in two more communities. An ___ - acre parcel was acquired in the watershed serving the small mountain village of Buenos Aires, and two parcels, totaling ___ acres, were acquired in the watershed serving the larger community of Corinto at the base of



Source for Nueva Vida water system

the mountains near the Guatemala border. (Corinto's water source is in the mountains near the already acquired watershed land serving Las Brises de Rio Negro.) The 8 parcels now owned by FECOVESO provide crucial protection for the water sources of 7 communities – preventing deforestation and grazing of the steep slopes above these sources, and allowing reforestation and long-term preservation.

FECOVESO and HCSC approved the new acquisitions after FECOVESO board members traveled

Thanks to our supporters...

10 communities received help in 2006.

This year's projects include acquisition of watershed lands, fencing of watersheds, water system improvements, school improvements and teacher support, and a capital grant to a grassroots savings and loan organization.



Source for Camino Nuevo/San Miguelito water system

to the watersheds in question, inspected the water sources and surrounding terrain, and agreed on prices with the land owners. HCSC also paid for barbed wire to fence the Buenos Aires land and previously acquired land in Las Flores and Nueva Vida. The wire was transported to the communities with the help of the FECOVESO board. Fences are being built by community residents.

With cattle fenced out of watershed lands, FECOVESO now looks forward enthusiastically to reforesting previously grazed areas. Nola and Christine Casey (see page 4) have identified a source of free seedlings. Christine will follow through with the planning and distribution of appropriate species to the communities for planting.



FECOVESO board meeting in new office space

School Improvements

School improvements funded by HCSC this year ranged from a few gallons of paint to freshen up classrooms in the school in San Marcos, to fencing to protect school yards in Camino Nuevo and El Paraiso, to a major rehab of the school in Chachaguala Arriba.



Chachaguala Arriba landscape)

The community of Chachaguala Arriba consists of scattered homesteads high in the mountains, as much as a four-hour walk from the highway. HCSC has provided funding for new roofing and other necessary materials to replace the school's leaking roof, rebuild its walls, and improve the condition of the attached room that provides housing for the teacher. HCSC also agreed to provide an annual bonus for a teacher who completes a full year of service in Chachaguala Arriba – as we continue to do for teachers in Las Flores.



Chachaguala Arriba school (before rehab)



A corner of the El Paraiso school yard next to a lane where herds of cattle are often driven. A new fence will keep the cattle out of the school yard.

Chachaguala Arriba, with the neighboring community of Monte Vista, asked HCSC to provide funding for the construction of a new camino around a section of the old camino that had been wiped out by a landslide (a common result of loss of forest cover). The camino is used by residents of these communities to travel on foot or on horse- or mule-back to the



The landslide

highway. Some parts of it are passable for four-wheel drive vehicles, some are not. The communities would like to bring in a machine to bulldoze a new road around the base of the slide and perhaps improve other sections while it is available. HCSC lacks the financial capacity to pay for such work and the technical capacity to judge how it should be done. However, we will help them in seeking assistance from the municipalidad (the equivalent of county government).

A Monte Vista vaca being chased off the camino.



Donated Supplies and Clothing

In a number of communities we continue to distribute clothing and school supplies donated by friends – including, this year, a bountiful supply of classroom materials – and many soccer balls – brought to Honduras by the Radliff family. Friends Cheryl and John brought with them suitcases full of clothing and art supplies, and friend Bonnie Acker once again supplied us with boxes of clothing to bring with us in our own suitcases.



Nola's old friend Chaio distributing clothes in the Chachaguala Arriba school. (Nola's knees are not what they used to be. Chaio made the long trek to Chachaguala Arriba as her representative.)

Pila Project

A pila is a sink-like reservoir made of concrete and typically measuring about two feet square and two feet deep. They are usually located immediately outside of residences and are filled from a faucet connected to a waterline. Incorporated in the concrete structure, with a separate drain, is a shallow rectangular basin with a washboard bottom. Pilas serve not only as kitchen sink and laundry facility but as a means of storing water for use during times when a water system is shut down, as often happens due to sediment stirred up by heavy rains.

The communities of Camino Nuevo and San Miguelito had received help from HCSC in improving their water system and protecting the land around its water source (and help in building the system 16 years ago from Nola as a Peace Corp volunteer). But most homes in these communities did not have pilas – until this year a grant from HCSC for materials made it possible for all those families that didn't have pilas to construct them.



Las Flores children trying out a donated soccer ball.

Caja Rural

In Spanish, *caja* means *box* or *cash box*, or sometimes *bank*. La Caja Rural de Ahorra y Credito is a rural savings and loan organization established by residents of Nueva Vida (including FECOVESO board member Nestor Lainez) and now serving surrounding communities as well. Capitalized through deposits from local residents and local fundraising activities, it had accumulated assets equal to about \$2600 when we suggested that it request a grant from HCSC. In response to that request, HCSC has granted an amount equal to 50% of what had already been raised.

When Caja Rural submitted its request it had already made 20 loans – 6 loans for agricultural supplies (\$587), one loan for livestock (\$360), 5 loans for construction/home improvement materials (\$1417), 3 loans for commercial micro-enterprises (\$952),

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Tortillas cooking on a clay stove, a common sight

Caja Rural (continued from page 3)

2 loans for land acquisition (\$760), and 3 loans for healthcare (\$487) – for a total of \$4563. Thus, for every dollar of initial capital (\$2600), Caja Rural had provided about \$1.75 in financing to meet basic household needs. We have asked the organization to give us a report again next year on their financial status and lending activity, so we can consider providing additional capital support. HCSC does not make grants to address the needs of individual families, but we like very much the idea of helping a community-based financial co-op address those needs.



Nola at the conference

Project Honduras Conference

Project Honduras is a network of (and internet portal for) people involved in constructive projects serving the people of Honduras. In October, Nola White, together with long-time activist and FECOVESO board member Rolando Lopez and water resources specialist Christine Casey (see accompanying story) attended the annual conference sponsored by Project Honduras in Copan Ruinas (a village adjacent to the world-famous Mayan ruins).

Held over a three-day period, the conference devoted a day to health care issues, a day to development issues, and a day to water issues. Nola gave a presentation to the conference on the watershed protection work of HCSC and FECOVESO. And many useful contacts were made with people – Hondurans and others – involved in related work.



Christine Casey with a resident of Las Brisas de Rio Negro

Cristina

Christine Casey (Cristina) first came to the Omoa region to do field work as a graduate student in the University of New Mexico Water Resources Program. Now with a Master of Water Resources degree and a firm commitment to work in the Third World, she has returned and is making herself extremely useful while she considers various full-time career possibilities. Her knowledge, energy, fluent Spanish, all-round competence and familiarity with local activists and community leaders make us wish our budget was such that we could offer her full-time work for the future. But in the meantime we are able to cover her living expenses and are grateful for her help.

To our supporters...

We are an all-volunteer organization, and we operate with very low overhead. We put your donations to work directly for the people of Honduras – and we depend completely on those donations to support our work. Your contributions can be sent to...

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