



NEWS FROM HONDURAS

Honduras Community Support Corporation

December 2009

HELPING RURAL HONDURANS TO LIVE BETTER ON THE LAND
AND TO PROTECT THE LAND THEY LIVE ON

WATERSHED ACQUISITIONS

CORINTO WATERSHED NOW PROTECTED. After almost 4 years of effort, HCSC and FECOVESO have completed the acquisition of the 80 acres immediately surrounding the water source for the community of Corinto. Purchased with HCSC funding, the entire area – much of which had been badly deforested – is now owned by FECOVESO (see FECOVESO story on page 3) and is being planted with seedling trees.



PREPARING TO PLANT DEFORESTED WATERSHED

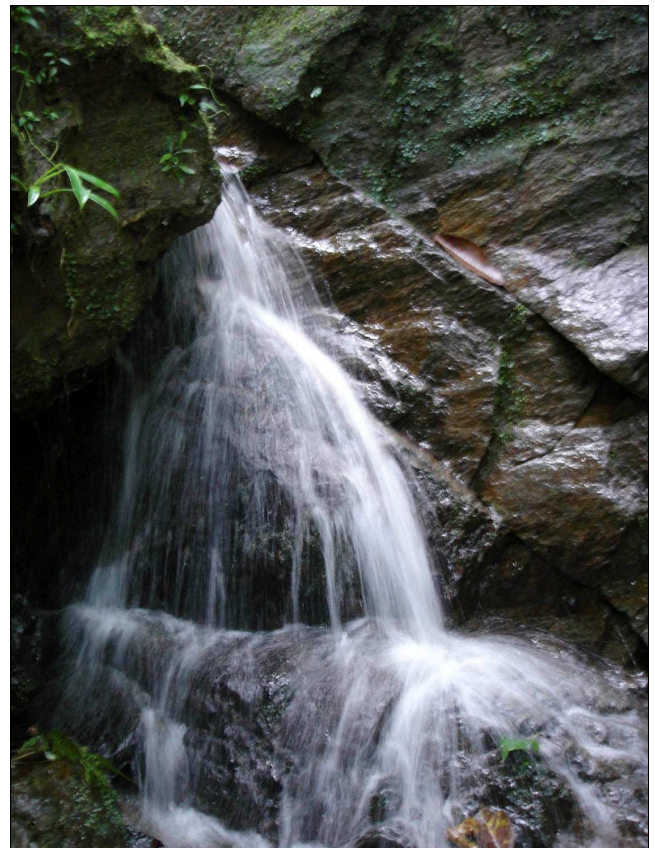
The area had consisted of three separate parcels that had to be acquired one by one from separate owners. As reported in last year's newsletter, the owner of the last parcel to be acquired held out for a much higher price than HCSC and FECOVESO were prepared to approve. The price that was finally paid was higher than what had been paid for the other parcels, but, thanks to pressure from local officials, the owner did agree to accept less than he had been demanding.

The reforestation work was completed by members of the Corinto community, with help from Honduras naval cadets (as reported in last year's newsletter) and from the Honduras National Forestry School. The school held two reforestation workshops in the area, attended by FECOVESO staff person Nestor Lainez and Corinto residents. Led by Julio Moncada, Corinto representative on the FECOVESO board of directors, members of the community spent many days planting seedlings on the steep slopes of the watershed.

In the coming year, HCSC will provide funding for fencing the area.

A WATER SOURCE FOR MONTE VISTA. Last year we reported on the problem faced by the small mountain community of Monte Vista, whose residents had to carry all of the water needed for their households from small streams – which were both unsafe and undependable as year-round sources, and required unending hours of work for the women and children who carried the water.

Preliminary plans for a gravity feed water system had been developed with help from HCSC volunteers Libby Earthman and Reid Bryson (see 2007 newsletter). Funding for development of the system was then promised by a US religious congregation (not affiliated with HCSC). The original plan was to utilize a water source on a large parcel of land that also included the source for the water system of the neighboring community of Nueva Florida. But efforts by HCSC and FECOVESO to acquire this parcel were frustrated by the fact that the owner was asking a price that was beyond our capacity – and that would have encouraged other land-owners to ask higher prices as well (see 2008 newsletter). Monte Vista's plan was then blocked entirely by the owner's refusal to allow another community to draw water from his land.



MONTE VISTA'S NEW WATER SOURCE

WATERSHED ACQUISITIONS

(CONTINUED)

This year, however, the community was able to identify another adequate source. With help from FECOVESO, they negotiated a reasonable price from the owner of a 20-acre parcel that includes the water source and the immediately surrounding watershed.



MONTE VISTA FOREST ABSORBING THE RAIN

The community was eager to close the deal quickly so that they could proceed with developing and completing the system before the beginning of the fall rainy system. HCSC had not budgeted enough to cover the full cost this year, but FECOVESO was able to make up the difference (about \$2,000) through its own (HCSC-funded) grant-making program.

The work then proceeded quickly, with each family contributing more than 60 person-days of labor. Monte Vista residents are now able to have water in their homes just by turning on a faucet.

TOTAL WATERSHED ACQUISITIONS TO DATE. HCSC has now purchased – and FECOVESO now owns and stewards – more than 270 acres of watershed, including 8 separate land areas (some involving multiple purchases) protecting water sources for 8 communities.



Corinto is the largest community we have worked with, and continues to grow. All the reforestation work will provide many with water. Both the quantity and quality of water increases as the forest grows.

SCHOOLS

FECOVESO GRANT TO EL PARAISO SCHOOL. The school in the community of El Paraiso on the coastal highway is known for the quality of the education it provides. As a result, enrollment has grown rapidly, and the school buildings have needed to be expanded to keep up. New construction has been supported in part by donations from some of the more prosperous residents of the area. FECOVESO used a portion of its grant-making resources to provide another part of what was needed.



EL PARAISO SCHOOL

TEACHER BONUSES & POTS & PANS. Once again, HCSC provided a \$100 bonus to a teacher in the community of Las Flores – on the recommendation of the local school committee – for completing a full year of successful teaching. The check was presented by Nola in a ceremony that, as in other years, also featured a piñata for the assembled students.



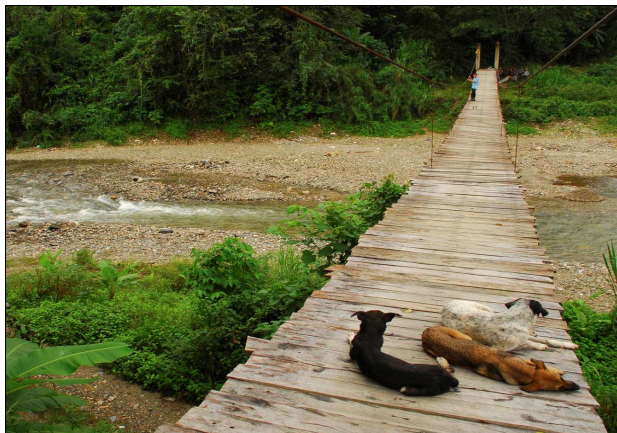
YEGIAN FAMILY ENJOY THE PINATA WITH LAS FLORES

A teacher bonus had also been committed for the community of Nueva Vida, but, because the current Nueva Vida teacher had not been teaching for a full year, the community asked if the money could be used to purchase pots and pans to be used to prepare school lunches. HCSC was happy to comply. The lunches are prepared with food provided in part by community members and in part by the government (until the recent disruption of government services).

BUENOS AIRES SCHOOL RESTORED. A fire had partially destroyed the school in the small mountain community of Buenos Aires. HCSC provided a grant for materials to rebuild the school, and community residents have now completed the restoration.

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENTS

NUEVA VIDA BRIDGE. Puentes hamacas (hammock bridges) are commonly used for crossing rivers, which rise dramatically with the torrential rains in Honduras, and for bridging steep ravines.



THIS IS WHERE WE CAME IN...

Nueva Vida and its down-the-mountain neighbors solicited materials to complete the bridge over Rio Indio. HCSC provided the cyclone fence, cables and other hardware. As you can see, labor and skill were provided by Nueva Vida and its neighbors.



HALFWAY THERE!

LAS CHICAS ELECTRIFICATION. The community of Las Chicas is at the base of the mountains just a mile from the coastal highway. Communities on the highway generally have access to electrical service, but service had not extended to Las Chicas. When we funded the expansion and improvement of the community's school last year, we included money for white paint to brighten up the unlighted interior of the building.

Now, however, the school and surrounding homes are lighted. HCSC provided funding to complete a project that had been carried almost to completion by local residents working with donated materials. Donated poles were set. Donated cable was strung, and a donated transformer was put in place. HCSC provided the money needed (less than \$650) to buy the remaining hardware items and to pay an engineer to complete the installation.

FECOVESO IN 2009



FECOVESO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

FECOVESO (Fundación Eco Verde Sostenible: the local land trust and community support organization) has had a busy year. HCSC has continued to increase the resources channeled through this locally controlled organization, originated through Nola's community organizing efforts.

In addition to funding FECOVESO's acquisition of watershed lands, HCSC provides operating support for the organization and, in each of the last two years, has contributed to a fund from which the organization makes grants for local projects – two of which are reported elsewhere in this newsletter. FECOVESO's fundraising committee is now working on plans to raise additional funds, both through local activities and through grant-writing efforts. Volunteer Noel Yegian, a grant writer in the U.S., worked with the committee to create fundraising materials.

Staff person Nestor Lainez and FECOVESO board members have played critical roles in arranging this year's watershed acquisitions for Corinto and Monte Vista, and they continue to work on other potential acquisitions for other communities.



FECOVESO COMMITTEE AT WORK

THIS YEAR'S VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers this year were long time HCSC supporters: for Susan Alan Craig, it was a return to an area she lived in almost 20 years ago; for Noel and Jeff Yegian it was a first trip after years of interest and financial support. For Hondurans they provided much appreciated expertise and patience and for all, there was learning, laughter and good times!

Susan, a current HCSC Board member, and her husband, Orin Lee, spent time both in the spring and in the fall. Susan is both a professional photographer and graduate of the School for International Training.

One highlight of her trip was a visit to the mountain community of La Mota, with FECOVESO member Nestor Lainez, to take part in introducing the community to the work of HCSC and FECOVESO. "I was struck by how eloquent Nestor was in emphasizing the need for consensus when a community chooses the project that will be most important to all of them, and the wholeheartedness with which the community members listened and participated."



WOMEN AT LA MOTA MEETING

CONFERENCE AND COUP

This year's Project Honduras conference (a gathering of national and international organizations doing work in Honduras) was scheduled to be held in Copan Ruinas from September 24-26, which, as it turned out, was a time of political turmoil in Honduras.

At the end of June, President Zelaya had been forcibly ejected from the country by the Honduran military with support from civilian leaders, who then organized an interim government. But, just a few days before the conference, Zelaya sneaked back into the country and took cover in the Brazilian embassy in Tegucigalpa, from which point he rallied his supporters. The interim government responded forcibly and declared a nation-wide curfew, so it was not clear whether the conference would take place.

The curfew was not lifted until after the conference – except in Copan Ruinas. International participants entered through Guatemala, and, while there were fewer participants than usual and the conference was somewhat shorter, the same spirit of sharing and concern for Honduras was obvious. The contacts were invaluable and the presentations exciting. Nestor Lainez from FECOVESO was inspired to focus his report back to the Board on their need to become self-sustaining, which sparked a lively and positive discussion.



PROJECT HONDURAS CONFERENCE

HCSC participants were Nola White, HCSC director Susan Alan Craig, and volunteer Orin Lee. Another FECOVESO board member was to have attended but opted out because of the country-wide uncertainty of the time.

Though much uncertainty remains, violence has been limited to the capital, Tegucigalpa. For the Omoa region where HCSC and FECOVESO are involved, the primary consequence of the coup has been the withering away of the few services normally provided by the government.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO HELP...

We are an all-volunteer organization, and we operate with very low overhead. We put your tax-deductible donations to work directly for the people of Honduras – and we depend completely on those donations to support our work. You can find more information, including past editions of this newsletter, at our web site

www.hcsc-honduras.org

Note that we have a new address – back in Cambridge, NY! Folks from this area produced another successful (\$900) tag sale this fall. Many thanks to all who contributed.

Your contributions can be sent to...

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