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Mitsubishi Foundation Grant Protects Coastal Wetlands in Mexico Leverages Funds for Critical Restoration Work

A donation from the Mitsubishi International Corporation Foundation has enabled American Bird Conservancy and Pronatura Noroeste to secure the purchase of 865 acres of coastal wetlands to conserve key bird habitat in Bahia Santa Maria, Mexico. In addition, the grant leveraged substantial federal funding to restore necessary water flow to an additional 7410 acres of wetlands.

Bahia Santa Maria, located on the shores of the Gulf of California, is part of a complex of coastal bays and estuaries notable for a number of wintering wetland-dependent birds, including 25% of all Western Sandpipers. Blue-footed Booby, Laughing Gull, Heermann's Gull, Royal and Least Terns, Marbled Godwits, Long-billed Curlew, and Stilt Sandpipers are also found in the area which is regarded as one of the six most important areas for bird conservation in Mexico.

"We're thrilled we could help protect the site for birds," said James Brumm, Executive Vice President and General Counsel of Mitsubishi International Corporation. "And we are very pleased our support leveraged additional resources needed to restore the area."

The western Mexican coast is under intense land-conversion pressure. Much of the coastal wetlands complex has been converted to shrimp farms, and many other areas have been harmed by water diversion projects that deteriorate bird habitat.

The Bahia Santa Maria site covers over 7,500 acres of wetlands that were drained and diked several decades ago to make way for a shrimp farm. The farm proved a failure and was abandoned, but the ecological damage remained.

Now, thanks to effective cooperation and generous funding, the land will be protected from future development and the natural water flows restored. The Mitsubishi International Corporation Foundation donated \$206,000 to purchase the area, which will form the nucleus of a private nature reserve to be run by ABC Mexican conservation partner, Pronatura Noroeste. The Mitsubishi grant also made possible another \$238,000 in federal funding under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act to enable Pronatura to restore tidal flow to the wetlands.

“This is a great example of a partnership between governments, corporations, and conservation organizations making something positive happen on the ground,” said George Wallace, Chief Conservation Officer for American Bird Conservancy, which facilitated the project.

Pronatura negotiated the purchase and will manage the reserve. It is working to establish official federal protection for the area.

“The Mitsubishi grant was key to protecting this area and leveraging the additional funding needed to restore the wetlands,” said Xicoténcatl Vega Picos, Director of Conservation for Pronatura Noroeste. “Now that the private reserve is established, we believe there is a much better chance to convince the Mexican government to designate the area a National Park.”

The Mitsubishi International Corporation Foundation partnership with the American Bird Conservancy in Mexico goes back to 2001, when it started its support for conservation activities in critical bird habitats in the state of Guerrero Negro and also in Bahia Santa Maria.

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ABC is the only 501(c)(3) organization that works solely to conserve native wild birds and their habitats throughout the Americas. ABC acts to safeguard the rarest bird species, restore habitats, and reduce threats, while building capacity in the conservation movement. ABC is the voice for birds, ensuring that they are adequately protected; that sufficient funding is available for bird conservation; and that land is protected and properly managed to maintain viable habitat.

ABC sets the bird conservation agenda by using the best science available to determine the highest priorities and the best solutions, and then communicates these priorities to the conservation community and the public through alliances and networks. ABC counts among its staff some of the foremost experts in bird conservation in the United States, and partners with many others throughout the Americas. ABC is a membership organization that is consistently awarded a top, four-star rating by the independent group, Charity Navigator.

Pronatura Noroeste works for the conservation of the flora, fauna and priority ecosystems of Mexico, promoting society's development in harmony with nature.

The **Mitsubishi International Corporation Foundation**, based in New York City, was established in 1992 with funding from Mitsubishi Corporation of Japan, and its U.S.-based subsidiary, Mitsubishi International Corporation. With a current endowment of nearly \$6 million, the Foundation has dedicated more than \$3 million to environmental causes throughout the Americas: www.micfoundation.org