

A continental wetland vital for birds

The Abras de Mantequilla (AdM) wetland is located in the central-western part of the province of Los Ríos, Ecuador, in the Guayas River Basin (Figure 1). The wetland is a floodplain covering 29,053 hectares (ha). It is listed as a ‘continental wetland’ under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, mainly because of its relevance as a nesting ground for migratory birds

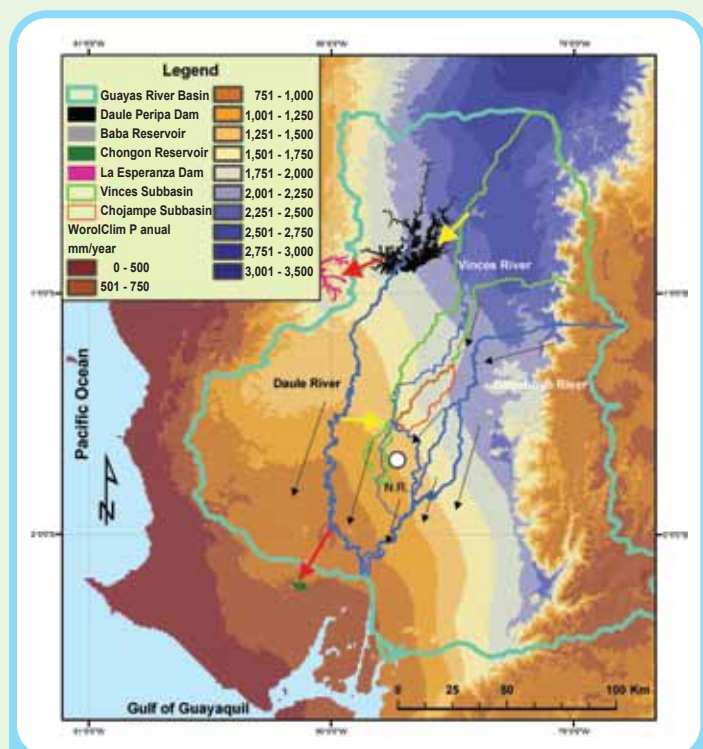


Figure 1: Location of Abras de Mantequilla wetland

and fish. Major land changes have been observed during recent years; only 2% of the wetland is now covered by natural forest. The predominant land uses in the system are rice and maize crops, and perennial pastures for cattle (adding up to over 88% of the total area), and banana crops in the southwestern portion of the wetland (4% of the area) (Figure 2). There are several land use issues affecting the wetland ecosystem, such as the extensive use of pesticides and fertilizers (yellow- and red-label pesticides are sprayed on short-term

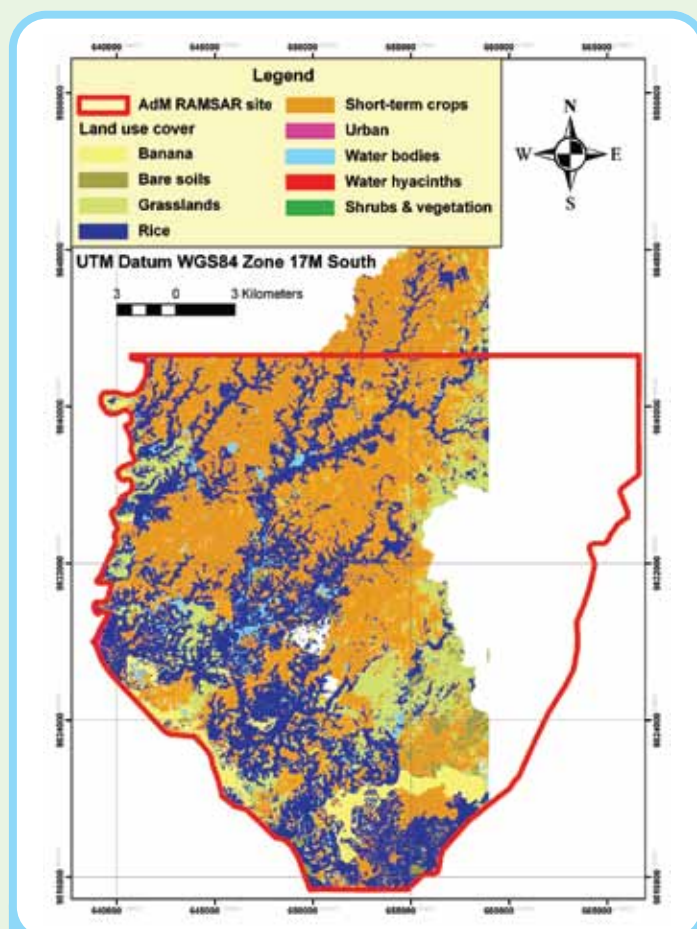


Figure 2: Land use in Abras de Mantequilla

crops) and the piling and burning of crop waste in the Ramsar wetland area.

A total of nine municipalities have an interest in the wetland, with the Baba, Pueblo Viejo and Vinces municipalities being the most active. In view of the problems besetting the wetland and the territorial reorganization at a national scale, these three municipalities pulled together in 2008 to form a commonwealth to address land use and waste disposal issues. By 2010, this process included the other six municipalities and gained legal status. Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral (ESPOL) (as partner of the WETwin project) established a cooperative



Agriculture is widespread across the wetland

