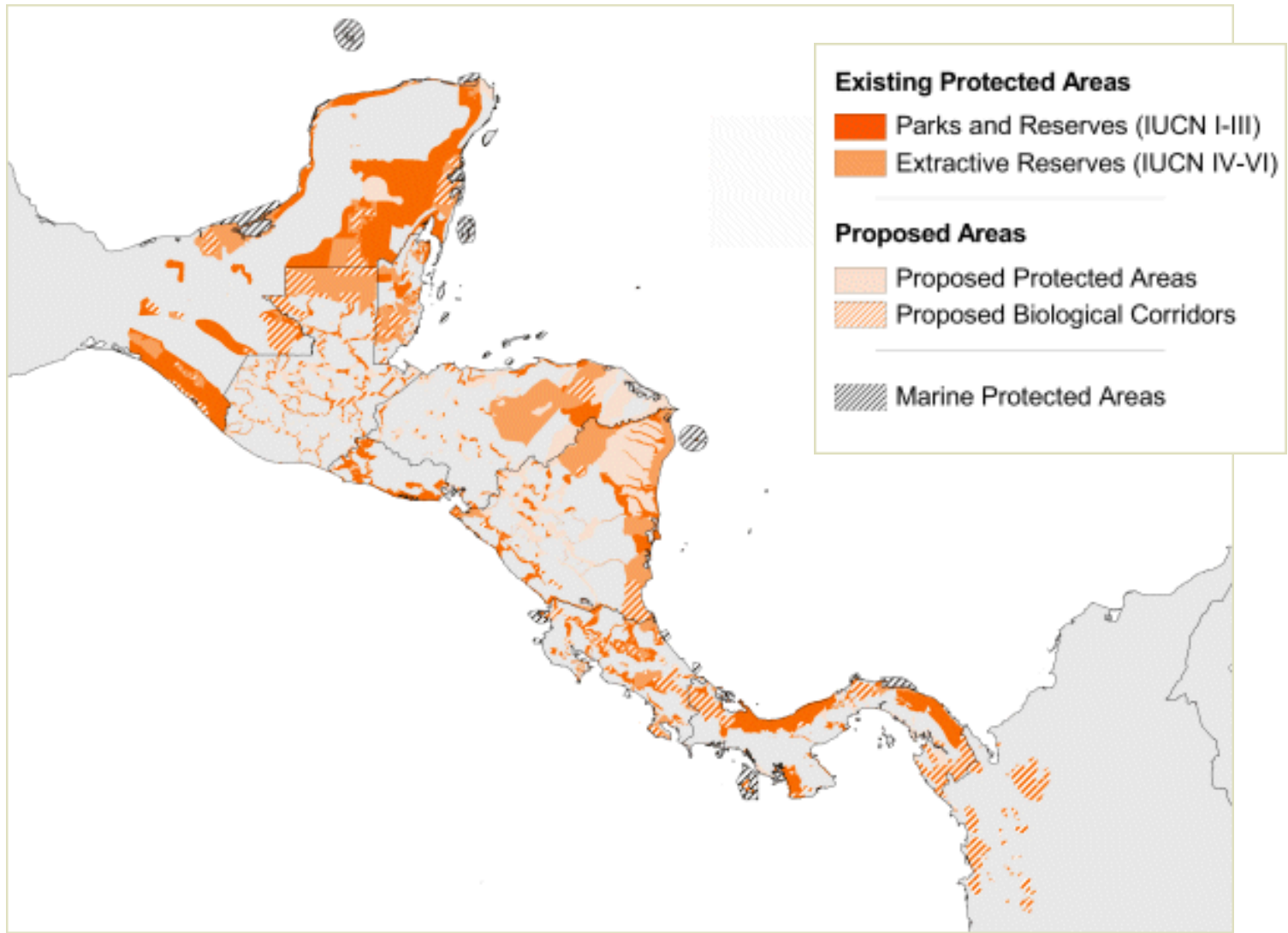


Proposed Elements of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor



Map Projection: Geographic

Citation: World Resources Institute (WRI), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and World Bank. 2003. World Resources 2002-2004: Decisions for the Earth: Balance, Voice, and Power. Washington, DC: WRI.

Analytical Overview:

Political boundaries rarely coincide with ecological boundaries. Globally, the World Bank estimates that there are more than 130 major landscapes of outstanding natural beauty or wildlife diversity that cross the national borders of 98 countries (MacKibbin 2000). Over the last decade, cooperation among countries in managing these ecosystems has been a growing trend, with poor nations in Africa, Eastern Europe, and Central America supported in their efforts by international donors. Part of the impetus for this trend has been mounting evidence from conservation biologists that "biological corridors," which link protected areas with green strips of vegetation running through neighboring rural lands, can help provide many species with the amount of space and movement they need to feed, breed and thrive. Research has shown that ocelots, butterflies, red squirrels, and Australian marsupials are some of the species that use corridors as stepping stones to enlarge their range and populations (Kaiser 2001:2199).

Description:

The map above presents the proposed elements of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor. Elements shown on the map include existing and proposed areas for protection in the corridor.

In 1997, the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor was conceptualized and agreed upon by seven Central American countries: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama. The proposed corridor will be a twenty-million hectare chain of rain and cloud forests, coastal mangroves, and mountain ranges, encompassing forty percent of the combined territories (Metrick 2002:2). Although Central America represents just half a percent of Earth's surface, the area teems with an astonishing array of mammals, birds, reptiles and plants-- accounting for about seven percent of the world's biological diversity (Miller et al. 2001:1).

In the years since the agreement was signed, in partnership with Mexico and with the help of generous international funding, a unique system of regional environmental governance has begun to develop: its ambitious aim to preserve the region's unparalleled natural treasures while increasing the quality of life of its inhabitants. Progress toward this goal is being closely watched by conservationists and policy-makers around the world.