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New international wetland restoration program to start in Yucatan

Tuesday, March 23, 2004
By Associated Press

MIAMI — A new international partnership for wetland restoration is, as its first action, dedicating \$750,000 to help restore the Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve area just south of Cancun in Mexico's Yucatan peninsula, officials announced.

The Sian Ka'an, widely considered the crown jewel of the Mexican Caribbean with its coastal dunes, lagoons, and mangrove swamps, is threatened by development, unregulated tourism, and unsustainable farming and fishing practices.

The restoration will be the first project of the new International Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership, which intends to restore wetlands and other aquatic habitats around the world.

Three founding members — The Gillette Company, The Nature Conservancy, and the United Nations Foundation — donated the money for the Sian Ka'an project.

In Sian Ka'an — the name means "Origin of the Sky" in the language of the Mayan people who once inhabited the region — the partnership plans to buy a key tract of land that protects the only access to an extensive wetland system and to help develop a program to buy other land in the area.

The partnership includes governments, conservation groups, community organizations, academia, and other businesses. It was announced Monday at a weeklong environmental conference for the protection of the Caribbean's marine and coastal ecosystems.

Source: Associated Press

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