

Meisner-Bogdahn, Renee, "Local Perceptions of Conservation in Puerto Jimenez: Sociocultural considerations when working towards long-term sustainability in the Osa Region." Advisor: Ivelina Romagosa. 2009.

As the percentage of land protected increases annually, and conservation becomes a global pursuit essential to the preservation of our Earth as we know it, it is important to consider the local communities' roles in these efforts of conservation. One community in particular was chosen to research this pressing issue: The city of Puerto Jimenez situated within the Osa Peninsula of Costa Rica, adjacent to the National Park Corcovado. The Osa peninsula is one of the highest priorities in terms of conservation for all of Central America, with over 33% of land in the Osa region under various levels of protection. The main objective of this research was to investigate the impact that conservation has had on the Osa Peninsula, and to identify some of the historical, cultural, and social challenges that should be considered when working towards long-term sustainability in the Osa Region. A series of in-depth interviews were completed with a total of 24 adult community members and 6 high school students: soliciting personal perceptions, opinions, and experiences related to conservation and development. The data collected implies that there are three main factors that greatly influence the local perceptions of conservation: significant historical events, development and change within the region, and the economic status and stability of community members. It was also found that many community members display a strong regional identity, which has the potential to be a large advantage when working towards sustainable development within the Osa Peninsula.