Partnership to Conserve Critical Freshwater Basins

When The Coca-Cola Company (TCCC) and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) first announced our transformational, multi-year partnership at WWF's annual meeting in Beijing in June 2007, one of our goals was to measurably conserve seven key freshwater basins around the world. Since the announcement, we have begun implementing projects in the selected basins that will explore and produce models for addressing four key challenges to river basin conservation across the globe: governance and management; resource protection; making conservation and development mutually supportive; and biodiversity conservation.

Included below is a snapshot of work underway in the seven river basins.

Yangtze

The lifeblood of central China, supporting over 400 million people and countless fish and wildlife species

Located in a region of diverse ecosystems, the Yangtze is the third longest river in the world and its basin holds 40 percent of China's freshwater. The partnership goal is to inspire better governance and sustainable river management practices across the basin. One partnership initiative is focused on training local residents on a scorecard that raises awareness and actively engages participants in tracking environmental indicators over time; another is aimed at developing low cost pollution control measures that can be adopted in villages across the basin. Partners also are participating in several events to raise awareness about river management practices, including the 2008 Wetland Ambassador Action program, which encourages students to disseminate ideas on how to mitigate the impact of climate change through wetland protection.

Mekong

The freshwater source of 60 million people in southeast Asia and home to more fish species than any river other than the Amazon

The partnership work in the Mekong is centered on influencing national policies for the conservation of freshwater resources through community management and local sustainable agricultural practices, targeted on two sub-basins – one in Thailand (Chi River Subcatchment), the other in Vietnam (Plain of Reeds). In the Chi, projects include constructing local village nurseries to produce native seedlings and planting trees for erosion control in community forests, public areas and on private land. On the Plain of Reeds, the partnership is advocating reform of wetlands policy in Vietnam, based on wetlands management demonstration projects in the field.

Rio Grande/Rio Bravo

An iconic river of the American southwest – the fastest growing region in the U.S. – and northern Mexico, and the freshwater source for 10 million people

The Rio Grande (Rio Bravo in Mexico) flows 1,885 miles from the San Juan Mountains of Colorado through New Mexico, Texas and Mexico to the Gulf of Mexico, serving as a natural boundary between the U.S. and Mexico. The partnership is working to improve environmental flows at seven key sites along the Rio Grande and its primary tributary, the Rio Conchos. Projects underway include control of thirsty invasive plant species and

voluntary transfers of water rights to keep water in streams for environmental purposes. Partnership efforts also are focused on conservation of endangered desert fishes and promotion of models for effective water stewardship by industries in the river basin.

Danube

The freshwater hub of Europe

The Danube is known as Europe's lifeline and the world's most international river basin, shared by 19 countries. The partnership work is helping to restore wetlands in Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary, providing critical habitat for the Danube's rich flora and fauna, restoring sturgeon migration across the Iron Gate Dams, and promoting and supporting solid river basin management through best practices exchange.

Mesoamerican Reef Catchments

The cloud forests of the Sierra de las Minas Biosphere Reserve of Guatemala, source of water for dozens of local communities and a vital link in the ridges-to-reef ecosystem that supports the spectacular Mesoamerican Reefs

Demonstrating the benefits of private investment in freshwater conservation and river basin management is the emphasis of partnership initiatives in the river basins above the Mesoamerican Reef, the longest barrier reef in the world. The partnership helped create the Water Fund a partnership of downstream water users that provides support to conservation efforts of upstream communities. The conservation upstream helps maintain water quality downstream. The Water Fund is supported by six private companies and continues to grow. Projects it supports include reduction of household firewood consumption and fire control and prevention. In Teculutan and Rio Hondo, fire control and prevention resulted in an 11 percent reduction in the area affected by forest fires from 2007-2008. Healthy forest cover means less erosion to pollute the water supplies of downstream users.

Lakes Niassa (Malawi) and Chiuta

Possibly the most unique – and as yet unspoiled – freshwater ecosystem on the planet

The work in this region of Coastal East Africa, centers on securing the livelihoods of local communities and conserving the unique biological diversity of Lake Niassa (Malawi). One of the main threats to the area is over-fishing by local communities and by migrant fishermen from Malawi coming across to fish illegally in Mozambique. Work includes the establishment of reserves in Lakes Niassa and Chiuta, training and accrediting community rangers to patrol the area, and certifying community fishing councils to oversee fishing licenses and registration of fishermen, boats, and nets in the area.

Southeastern U.S. Rivers and Streams

A globally significant center of freshwater biodiversity

The Southeastern U.S. Rivers and Streams work focuses on the Tennessee, Cumberland and Mobile River basins, which are among the world's richest temperate river ecosystems. The partnership goal is to harmonize rapid urban growth with the protection of freshwater ecosystems in the drought-threatened area by increasing the implementation of sustainable water policies and practices. Water reuse practices have become a focus, including efforts to modify Birmingham, Alabama's water resource plan, and pilot projects underway in several areas to demonstrate the value of reuse practices. In addition, more than 1,500 rain barrels from Coca-Cola have been distributed in middle Tennessee to capture water run off during rain events. The success of this program has initiated a national launch to local watershed groups and bottlers.