

## Project Update April 2026

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**Project Title:** A Mermaid's Refuge: Safeguarding and Strengthening Costa Rica's Resilient Manatees and People

### **Update:**

While December and January were relatively quiet, waiting for permits approval (we got it), we have increased our interventions since then. We began with a field validation of our restoration sites. While our initial goal is to restore 500 meters, our field assessment has revealed that the scale of erosion and sedimentation is much larger than anticipated, with a total of 8–12 km in need of restoration. We still intend to begin with the first 500 meters as a starting point.

Following the validation, we used GPS to map the trees and spaces for seedling collection. Our tree nursery is now fully operational, with 600 seedlings currently growing. We aim to scale this to 5,000 seedlings by the end of June, focusing on three key species: *Pachira aquatica*, *Zygia longifolia*, and *Erythrina* (Poro de Agua). We have also been in discussions with local community leaders to encourage cattle ranchers to provide land and fencing for restoration. They have verbally agreed to participate, and we are currently preparing formal documentation to finalize these collaborations by June.

In light of the NOAA report regarding a potential "Super Niño," we have decided to keep the seedlings in the nursery slightly longer than originally planned to ensure they can survive potential drought conditions. While the lack of flooding this year is beneficial for our restoration efforts in August, the increased heat stress on the plants remains a concern. Overall, we have high expectations for our planting/restoring phase in August.

Regarding community outreach, we held two youth encounters over the last four months (a total of 18 recurrent participants attended to this events). We have designed and printed educational games focused on critical thinking and conservation knowledge, which will be used during school visits in June. We plan to donate these games to the teachers afterward.

Finally, we have purchased six camera traps, three of which are already installed. A preliminary test run successfully recorded 5 mammal species (Ocelot, Raccoon, *Galictis vittata*, Red brocket deer, armadillo) and 4 bird species (Rufous tail hummingbird, tiger heron, green ibis and common gallinule). The local community has been very receptive, with 24 consistent participants (they always come) supporting and taking ownership of these actions.