

Foro de Confluencia Solidaria y Movimiento Ríos Vivos, Costa Rica Sustainable Water Network, Arizona, USA

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Roundtable 1: Governance

Good morning to all. We're Oscar Beita and Madeline Kiser, members of environmental justice coalitions based in Central America and the Southwest USA, including el Foro de Confluencia Solidaria and Movimiento Rios Vivos in Costa Rica, and the Arizona-based Sustainable Water Network.

The main point we want to make about water governance is that it must be based in a Rights of Nature framework if our planet is to survive. If nature's limits aren't protected it will be impossible to protect human life. This sounds simplistic but involves dramatically shifting the framework proposed for the UN 2023 Water Conference.

We offer a glimpse of the basin where we live in the south of Costa Rica because its story is emblematic.

My family is a ranching family, with long roots here.

In this basin, in 1979, Fresh Del Monte began planting pineapple. The company soon became one of the world's largest producers; also, the entity holding 98% of the basin's concessioned water. As everywhere, there are many struggles unfolding here—all related to the current economy. Recently, a national study was published documenting rising crime in areas where there are cattle and pineapple. It's not enough to promote water for sustainable development without understanding that not all "development" feeds the spirit.

To help heal this basin, a year ago Del Monte and the German Agency for International Cooperation formed an alliance, in part to reforest selected ranches. However, without advocating for more profound change—such as openly discussing the water the company uses, and the need to transition from pineapple to small-scale farming—the alliance is delaying the kind of shift the region and the planet desperately need.

As even companies participating in this year's World Water Week acknowledge, it is hard for them to advocate for change that threatens their bottom line. Yet corporations are coming to define global water policy.

The most important action step therefore is to challenge this trend, while ensuring that Indigenous leaders, water justice activists, and experts from fields protecting nature's limits, lead the development of global water policy.