

Ascema Nacional

ASCEMA - Brazilian National Association of Environmental Careers

Brazil's environment in danger (An open letter to society)

On the destruction of federal environmental management and the recent verbal attacks to environmental civil servants

We, the federal civil servants of the Environmental Careers, represented by the National Association of Environmental Careers (ASCEMA Nacional), concerned and outraged by the latest statements and position of the current Minister of the Environment of Brazil, Mr. Ricardo Salles, come forward to bring information to the wider society regarding the work of the Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (ICMBio) and to highlight the achievements of the institution, despite the difficulties imposed, of all ideological shades by the Governments in terms of insufficient budgeting and personnel to perform its important functions, which are determined by the Federal Constitution.

Mr. Salles has repeatedly attacked and defamed ICMBio's corps of servants through social media publications and press statements with comments based on superficial impressions after visits to protected areas, in which he did not deign to converse with the civil servants to inquire about the situation and allow them to outline any problems and difficulties. Mr. Salles refers to the civil servants in an offensive way (his Instagram post saying that he intends to strengthen ICMBio "with serious and competent people and not with "hippies" since "it has already been proven that this does not work" as a key example). Last Saturday, in Rio Grande do Sul, Mr. Salles was fallacious and rude with civil servants of the Lagoa do Peixe National Park, berating and threatening them in public with administrative disciplinary processes for their absence at an event which was not in the official agenda and to which they had not been invited, much to the amusement of the audience, which consisted mostly of people with interests in the direct commercial use of the area currently protected by the park.

We now present some data with regards to ICMBio.

ICMBio's institutional mission is to "protect natural heritage and to promote socio-environmental development" in Brazil, a country known to have the greatest biodiversity on the planet. ICMBio is responsible for the management of 334 protected areas, totaling 173 million hectares (9.1% of the continental territory and 24.4% of the country's marine territory), and 14 conservation research centers in Brazil. Among these protected areas are National Parks such as Iguaçu, Tijuca and Fernando de Noronha, locations so very dear to the Brazilian people and greatly admired by international visitors, as well as lesser known areas of sustainable use, such as Extractive Reserves. These areas protect the environment and the livelihoods of over fifty-seven thousand registered beneficiaries (plus an estimated twenty thousand new

beneficiaries from newly installed extractive reserves) and eighty thousand residents in coastal Environmental Protection Areas, representing about one hundred and sixty thousand families from traditional communities or about six hundred thousand Brazilians who benefit directly from these areas.

Management of the protected areas involves the promotion of the participation of society in their administration, infrastructure for tourism, scientific research and conservation, law-enforcement, firefighting and fire prevention, the participation in environmental licensing processes and the promotion of the sustainable use of the biodiversity of these areas.

To develop this mission, ICMBio has only 1,593 civil servants, approximately one for each 100,000 hectares of protected area. As a comparison, the US Parks Service has 1 civil servant for every two thousand hectares (fifty times more than Brazil). ICMBio's annual budget is about US\$ 83 million, representing about US\$ 0.50 per hectare per year, or 0.009% of the country's budget.

Despite this situation, throughout its 12 years of existence, ICMBio has been working consistently to face this enormous challenge, compensating for the precarious conditions with increased efficiency and forming many partnerships. Numerous local, national and international partnerships have been established enabling enormous advances in the management of our protected areas and endangered species. There has been computerization of almost all processes, which promotes transparency and agility. The Management Analysis and Monitoring (SAMGe) and Biodiversity Authorization and Information (Sisbio) online systems monitor management and scientific research in protected areas, and have been publicly recognized and awarded. ACADEBIO has been created, a training center for ICMBio and other environmental agencies' employees. The Federal Audit Court performed a thorough audit of ICMBio's work in the Amazon, published in 2014, and was extremely appreciative when referring to ACADEBIO, recommending that it be expanded to cover all the National System of Protected Areas (SNUC). This has been occurring, with the participation of state environmental agencies' employees, as well as other partners, in courses offered at ACADEBIO.

Let the numbers speak for themselves:

Visitation in protected areas grew by almost 300% between 2007 and 2018 (from 3.1 million to 12.4 million visitors), generating income for societies both local and regional, and increasing the budget of the federal government. The study "Contribuições do Turismo Nacional" (National Tourism Contributions) showed that about 80 thousand jobs have been created and over US\$ 500 million have been generated to the economy by the tourism in protected areas and that for each Brazilian Real invested in protected areas there is a seven-fold economic benefit for the country.

During these 12 years, over 100 management plans were published (there were 79 in 2007 and 195 in 2018), creating the instruments for the management of protected areas;

Over 160 protected area management councils were created (there were 115 in 2007 and 281 in 2018), guaranteeing society's participation in management, as determined by Federal Legislation;

In the process that resulted in the national list of endangered species of fauna, more than 12 thousand species were evaluated in partnership with the national scientific community. Action plans were prepared for the conservation of 781 endangered species of fauna, which represent 67% of the total. Brazil is

internationally recognized as the country with the higher percentage of threatened species currently being contemplated in conservation action plans.

Over 30 thousand research projects on our socio-environmental heritage were encouraged, authorized and monitored , generating knowledge for society.

The National Biodiversity Monitoring Program has been implemented in 89 protected areas throughout the country, involving local communities, which generates income and encourages the involvement of local society in its management.

More of ICMBio's management data is available at qv.icmbio.gov.br/ and at <http://samge.icmbio.gov.br/Painel>

The immense efforts of ICMBio, its corps of civil servants and board of directors, generated the recognition of society, and is reflected in the diverse awards won by ICMBio, including but not limited to:

- Innovation Award in Public Management (granted by the National School of Public Administration):

2008: Biodiversity Information and Authorization System - Sisbio

2009: Virtual Warehouse

2017: Management Monitoring System – SAMGE

- National Biodiversity Award (granted by the Ministry of Environment)

2017: National Action Plans (NAPs) for the conservation of endangered fauna

- National Tourism Prize (granted by the Ministry of Tourism)

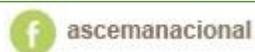
2018: the contribution of tourism in protected areas for the Brazilian economy (in the "Tourism monitoring and evaluation" category)

2018: Brazilian network of long-distance trails and connectivity (in the "Heritage appreciation by tourism" category)

- Public Spirit Award (granted by the Aliança coalition of nonprofit organizations)

2018: Environment category.

Considering all information provided above, we, the federal civil servants of the Environmental Careers, reaffirm our commitment to the protection and management of Brazilian environmental heritage. We express our repudiation of the statements made by the current Minister of the Environment, Mr. Ricardo Salles with regards to environmental management in Brazil. We remind Mr. Salles that, as public servants, we have the mission of serving the public and taking care of the protected natural areas that belong to Brazil and its people and fulfill the role set forth in the Federal Constitution. Therefore, the good management of the protected areas is part of the constitutional role of the Brazilian State. We ask for the support and commitment of Brazilian and international society to defend the continuity and improvement of this work, which is an achievement of the Brazilian people, guardians of an environmental heritage of planetary importance.



Associação Nacional dos Servidores da Carreira de Especialista em Meio Ambiente e do PECMA –

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