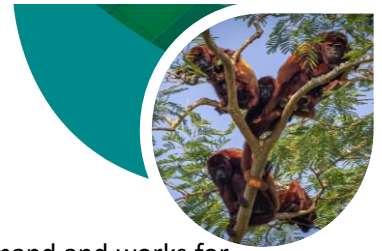




June 2023

# High Conservation Values and High Carbon Stock Assessment (HCV-HCS) for San Alberto – Daabon Group

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## About Proforest

Agricultural commodity production can be done in a way that meets global demand and works for the natural environment where commodities are grown, benefits the people who live and work there, and in a way that creates a resilient climate.

At Proforest, we focus on the production base and supply chains of agricultural and forestry commodities, including soy, sugar, rubber, palm oil, cocoa, coconut, beef, and timber. We have more than twenty years of practical experience supporting companies, governments, communities, and partners to establish responsible production and sourcing practices in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, and North America.

We support companies with direct action to tackle environmental and social risks throughout a supply chain. We also work with governments, companies, and collaborative organizations to address systemic issues beyond the supply chain, within a landscape or a sector, to deliver positive outcomes at scale. We bring expertise in these environmental and social issues that drive our work, including protecting and restoring forests and natural ecosystems, conserving biodiversity, and advancing gender equality and human rights.

We believe there needs to be a foundation of good governance to drive real change. We support this by creating and facilitating multi-stakeholder platforms, developing tools and guidance, providing policy advice, and delivering training to build capacity and ensure local benefits and ownership of issues in the places where commodities are produced.

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Visit our website to see an [overview of projects](#) we've worked on and to [meet our global team](#).  
You can also find training and resources at the [Proforest Academy](#).



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## 1. Introduction

Palmas de San Alberto and DAABON Group (hereinafter "the company") have requested Proforest's support for the Land Use Change Assessment (LUCA), High Conservation Values (HCV), and High Carbon Stock (HCS) studies. Within the commitments to the company, the study includes the High Conservation Values (HCV) and High Carbon Stock (HCS) assessment following the HCV Resource Network (HCRN) guidelines, the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA), under the requirements of the RSPO criteria.

In addition, it seeks to carry out a Land Use Change Analysis (LUCA) that seeks to identify possible land cover changes associated with the oil palm production process that has occurred since 2005 and whose results determine remediation and compensation measures in accordance with RSPO guidelines.

Proforest has been contracted to carry out an integrated assessment of High Conservation Values (HCV) and High Carbon Stock (HCS) in the Department of Cesar in Colombia with the following objectives:

- a. Identify and recommend management and monitoring activities for those High Conservation Values and/or High Carbon Stock considered to be present in the study area.
- b. To update the company's information to obtain RSPO certification.
- c. Support the company in meeting its sustainability commitments in existing operations and planned new plantations.

The High Conservation Value Resource Network has developed a methodology to identify zones, areas, sites, and resources of high conservation importance, either because of their environmental and ecosystem characteristics or because they are indispensable for securing the livelihoods of communities. High Conservation Values are divided into six categories:

- |                                |                       |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Biodiversity concentrations | 4. Ecosystem services |
| 2. Large landscapes            | 5. Community needs    |
| 3. Rare ecosystems             | 6. Cultural values    |

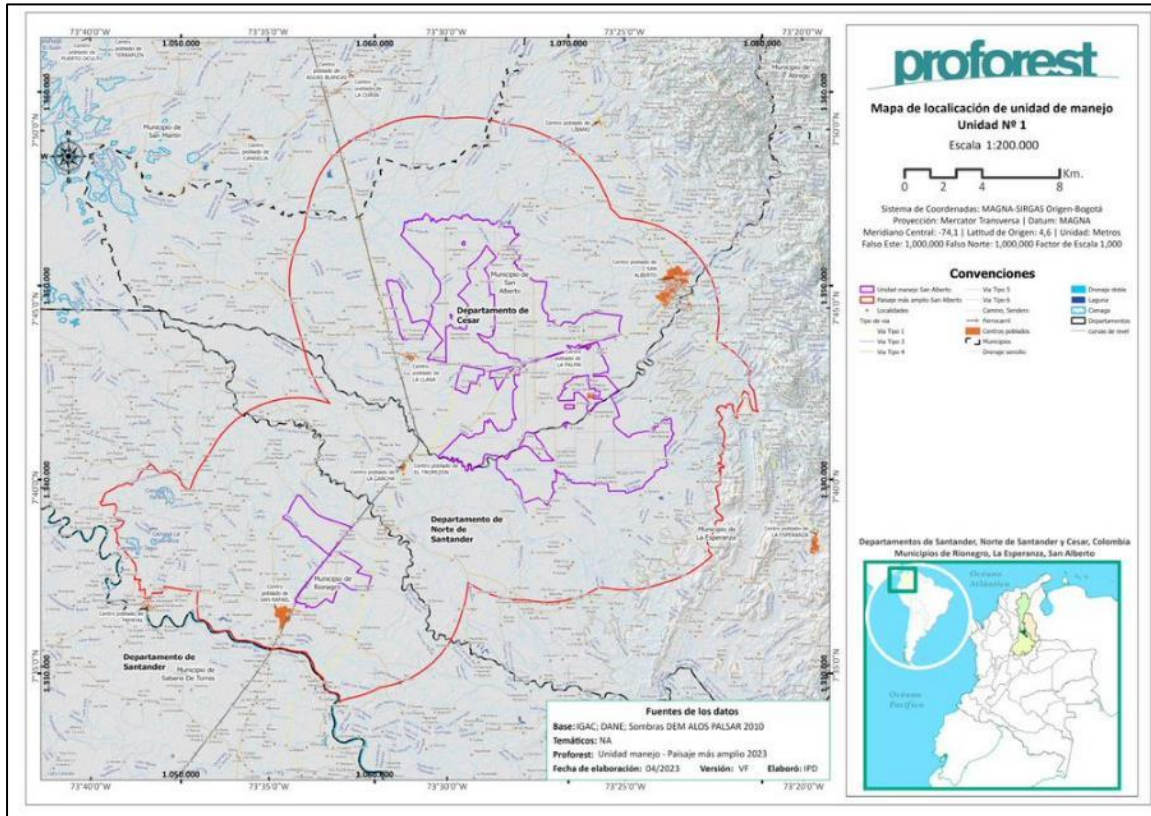
The High Carbon Stock Approach (HCSA) assesses forest cover that should be conserved in productive landscapes. HCS set-asides are divided into four categories:

- |                          |                              |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. High-density forest   | 3. Low-density forest        |
| 2. Medium density forest | 4. Young regenerating forest |



## 2. Location of the assessment

The assessment area is located in the northern region of Colombia, specifically in the department of Cesar. It falls under the jurisdiction of the municipality of San Alberto and is situated within the production unit of the esteemed DAABON Group. The geographical polygon encompassing this area spans an extensive 9,603 hectares.



Map 1 Location of the study area.

## 3. Social HCVs (categories 4-6)

### 3.1 Methodology

The methodology encompassed two distinct phases: a comprehensive review of the literature and secondary data obtained from official sources and prior studies provided by the company. This entailed examining internal procedures related to communications, customary rights, Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), sustainability policies, code of ethics, certifications, and documentation on legal ownership and land use.

Subsequently, fieldwork was undertaken, involving several key activities such as identifying and prioritizing stakeholders, conducting focus groups, interviews, direct observation, document review, mapping, and establishing a timeline. The process was further divided into four stages to ensure compliance with FPIC requirements and identify social High Conservation Values (HCVs):

1. Identification and prioritization of stakeholders
2. Conducting fieldwork and gathering information in collaboration with stakeholders
3. Analyzing the collected information



4. Conducting public consultations to validate findings and ensure inclusivity in decision-making processes.

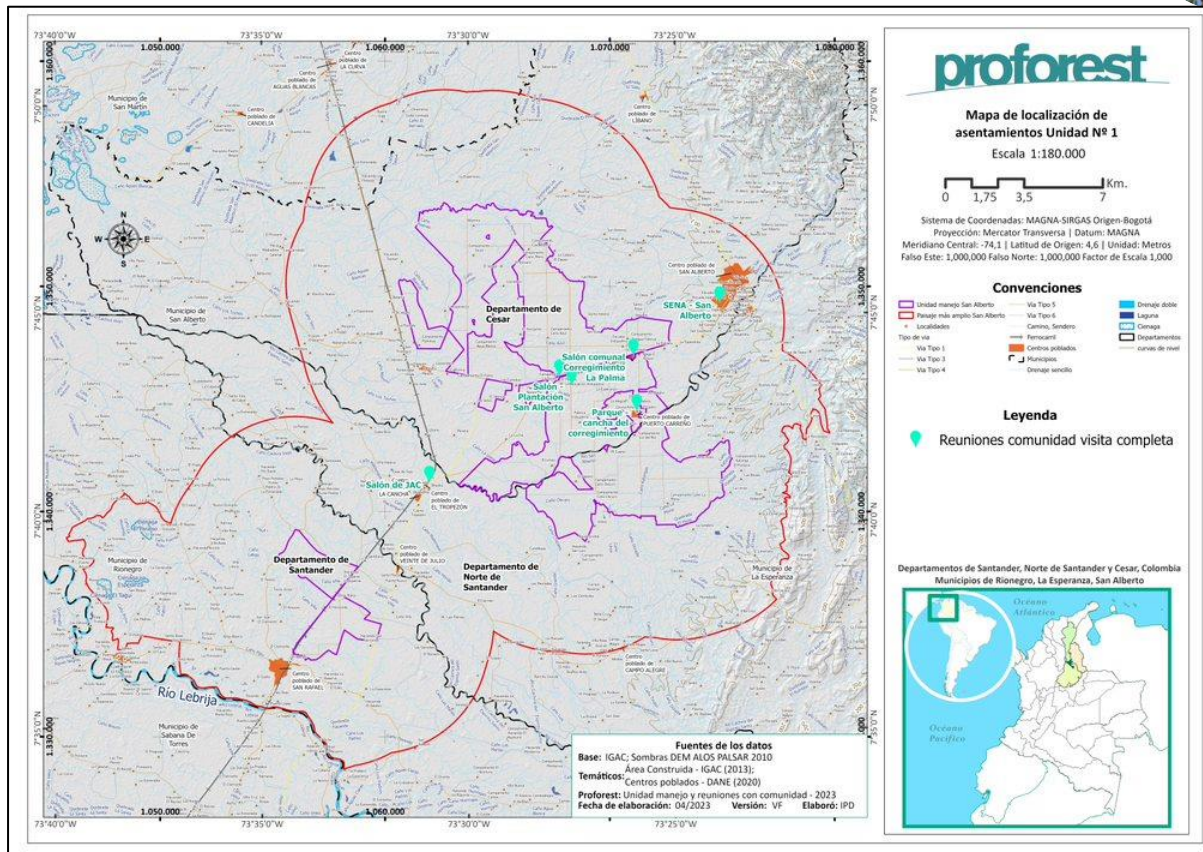
### 3.2 Preliminary Results

#### Scoping Study:

Regarding the status of Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), it was verified that the community and stakeholders were aware of the DAABON Group and its Palmas de San Alberto project, including both its short-term and long-term initiatives. Moreover, the study confirmed that consent had been obtained from stakeholders, including neighboring communities, to proceed with the assessment of High Conservation Values (HCVs) and High Carbon Stock (HCS).

The concerns and recommendations expressed by social actors were carefully analyzed alongside the findings from fieldwork, literature review, and other methodologies employed in this evaluation, making this comprehensive analysis crucial to determine the presence or absence of Critical Conservation Areas (CVAs) within the production unit.

The following synthesis focuses on the most significant aspects to concisely summarize the key findings from the engagement with social actors. These are the basis for assessing the presence or absence of HCVs 4, 5, and 6 within the area under evaluation.



Map 1. Map of communities in influence in the management area and broader landscape.

## 4. Environmental HCV (categories 1-3)

### 4.1 Methodology

This evaluation drew upon ten official international and national reference documents and secondary data obtained from official and academic sources. These sources encompassed fields such as hydrography, topography, climatology, ecology, and demography. Additionally, studies and research on biotic richness, endemism, and conservation were also utilized.

The fieldwork was conducted following the guidelines outlined in the HCV Resource Network's HCV Assessment Manual (HCVRN, 2013). It consisted of two phases: the pre-assessment phase and the assessment phase. During the pre-assessment phase, secondary information provided by the company and publicly available data were collected, along with an initial stakeholder analysis for the consultation process. This information facilitated an analysis of the likelihood of different HCV-HCS categories being present and guided the planning of the assessment phase. The fieldwork provided preliminary information to confirm the presence and/or absence of HCV-HCSs. The consultation process involved engaging with previously identified stakeholders through face-to-face activities and socio-environmental field assessments.

To evaluate environmental High Conservation Values (HCVs), a Rapid Ecological Assessment (REA) was conducted. This involved sampling various biological groups, such as mammals, herpetofauna, birds, and plants, at selected points of interest within the company's natural areas. Additionally, sampling plots were established to determine areas with High Carbon Stock (HCS) following the guidelines provided by the High Carbon Stock Approach (HCSA).



Lastly, the data collected during the fieldwork underwent thorough analysis, resulting in comprehensive reports detailing the identified HCV areas, HCS areas, and conservation zones within the company's properties.

## 4.2 Preliminary Results

There is no overlap with areas of legal-environmental exclusion such as national, regional, or local protected areas, as defined by Colombia's Sistema Nacional de Áreas Protegidas (SINAP). Furthermore, there is no overlap with forests, permanent wetlands, peatlands, or other ecosystems of conservation importance.

In addition, no significant concentrations of fauna and/or flora species, Rapid Assessment Program (RAP) species, or endemic species or ecosystems have been identified or recorded.

The Rapid Ecological Assessment (REA) recorded 109 bird species, representing 20 orders and 41 families. Among mammals, 19 species were identified, distributed across eight orders and 18 families. The herpetofauna consisted of 21 amphibian species from seven families within the order Anura, while the reptiles encompassed 43 species from 13 families and three orders. Regarding plant diversity, the assessment documented 79 species, spanning 63 genera and 33 families.

Based on the High Conservation Value (HCV) assessment, it has been determined that HCV 1 (Biodiversity concentrations), HCV 2 (Large landscapes), and HCV 3 (Rare ecosystems) are present within the evaluated property and its broader landscape. However, it should be noted that no peat soils were found in the assessed area.

## 5. Results on HCVs

### 5.1 Identification of High Conservation Value areas:

HCVs identified as present in the company's properties include HCV 1 (Species diversity), HCV 3 (Ecosystems and habitats), HCV 4 (Ecosystem services in critical situations), and HCV 5 (Community needs). These HCVs are closely associated with species found in the tropical dry forest and the wetland complex of the Magdalena River Basin. These areas play a crucial role in water regulation, nutrient cycles, and connectivity and serve as a refuge for biodiversity. The San Alberto River and the flood and buffer area of the Magdalena River are identified as essential water bodies linked to the HCV areas.

However, HCV 2 (landscape-level ecosystems and mosaics) and HCV 6 (Cultural values) are determined to be absent. The distance between the company's operations and the nearest community, which is more than 5 km away, contributes to the absence of HCV 2 and HCV 6. Resources such as water for human consumption, agricultural activities, livestock, and fishing supplies are crucial for meeting the basic needs of the communities. In consultations with the communities, no critical locations or resources directly affected by the company's operations were identified.

HCV 6 (Cultural values) is determined to be absent based on information from the Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia (ICANH). There are no archaeological records within the plantations or in the broader landscape, and consultations with local communities and authorities did not reveal any specific findings or knowledge of pre-Hispanic objects. Additionally, no areas of cultural, ecological, or religious importance were identified, and there are no indigenous community settlements or collective territories within the study area.

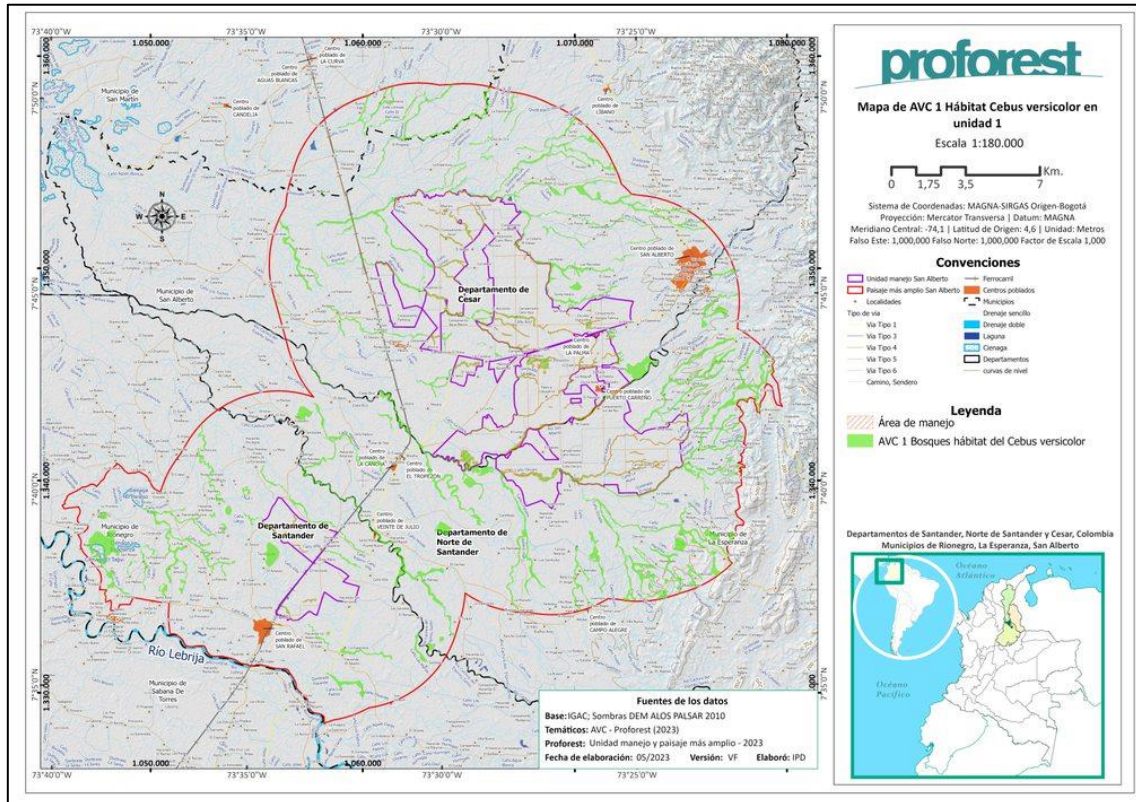




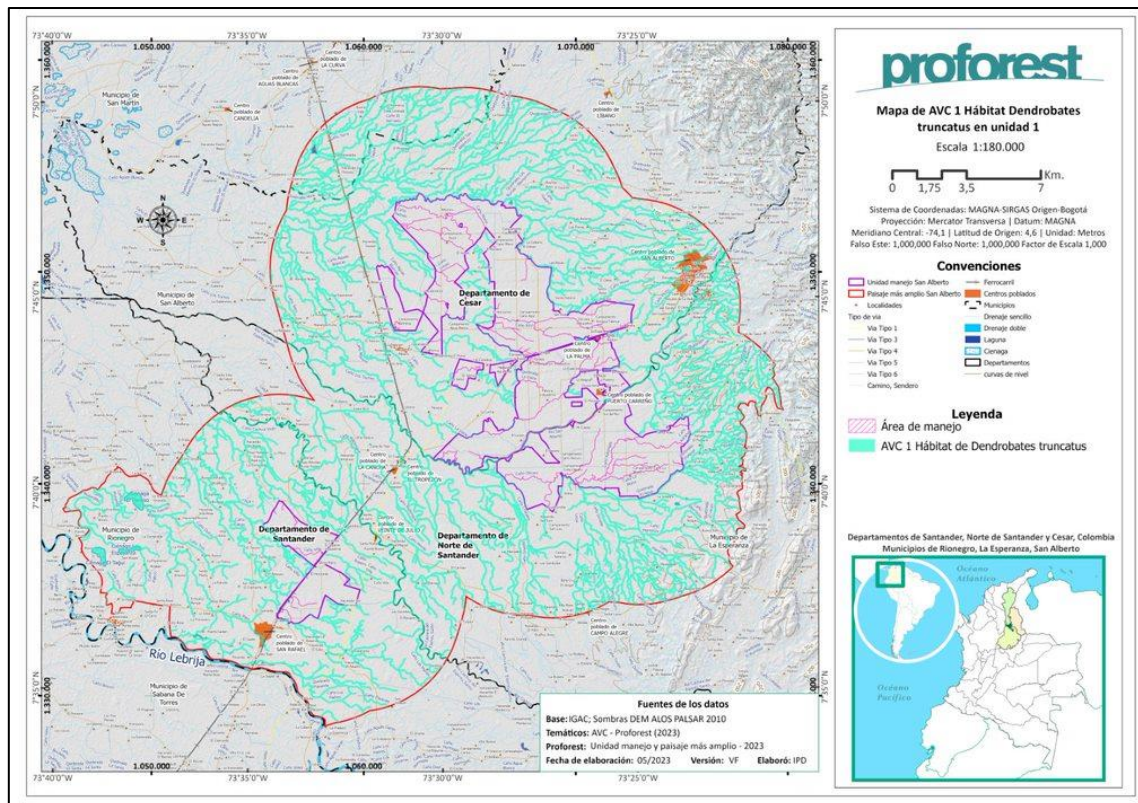
Below is the summary table of preliminary HCVs:

AVC	UM - San Alberto	Comment
1	Yellow-striped poison dart frog ( <i>Dendrobates truncatus</i> ) Caribbean Guacharaca ( <i>Ortalis garrula</i> ) Corn monkey ( <i>Cebus versicolor</i> )	Dt: Water bodies Og: Water bodies and forests Cv: Forests
2	<b>Absent</b>	
3	Forests and Aquatic Ecosystems	BST - Wetlands
4	Ecosystem services associated with water bodies San Alberto River - Pipes: Oscuro, Picho and Mono	Provision, Regulation, and Control
5	Ancestral place (recreation) of access to the San Alberto River (or also called Holy Spirit)	Fishery resources
6	<b>Absent</b>	

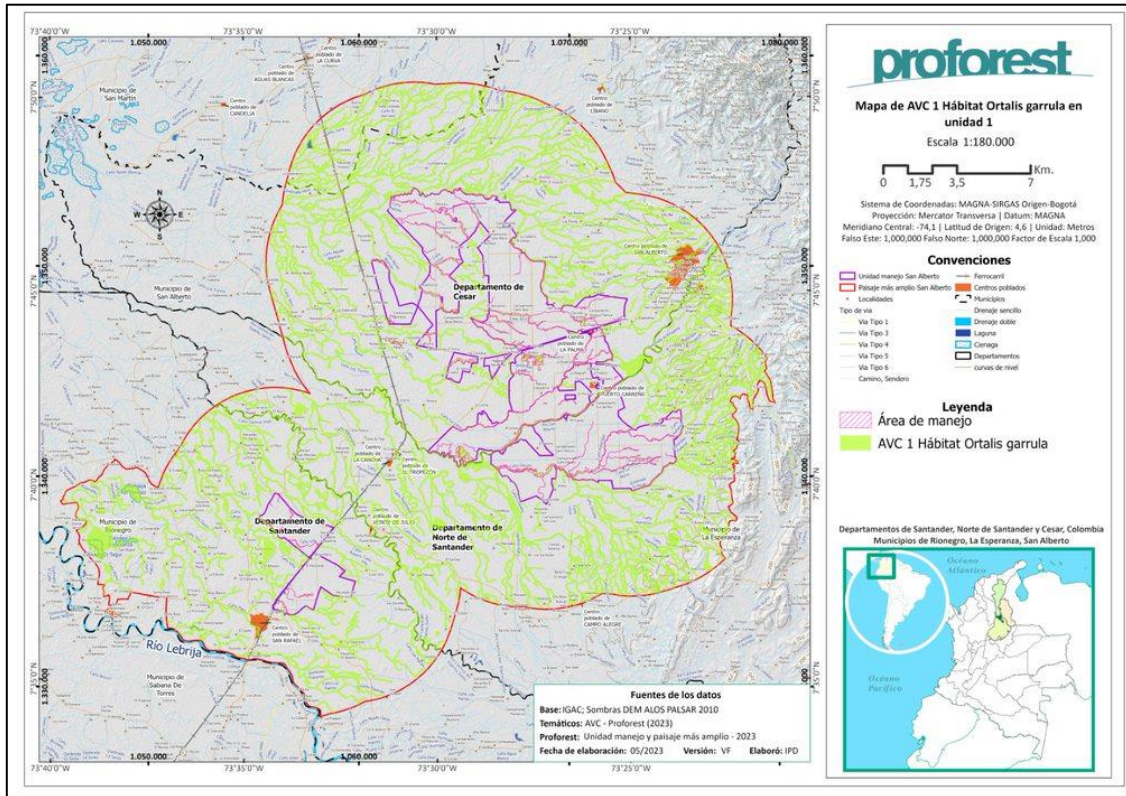
Upon reviewing the summarized information regarding HCVs, the corresponding cartography depicting each of the related values is presented below:



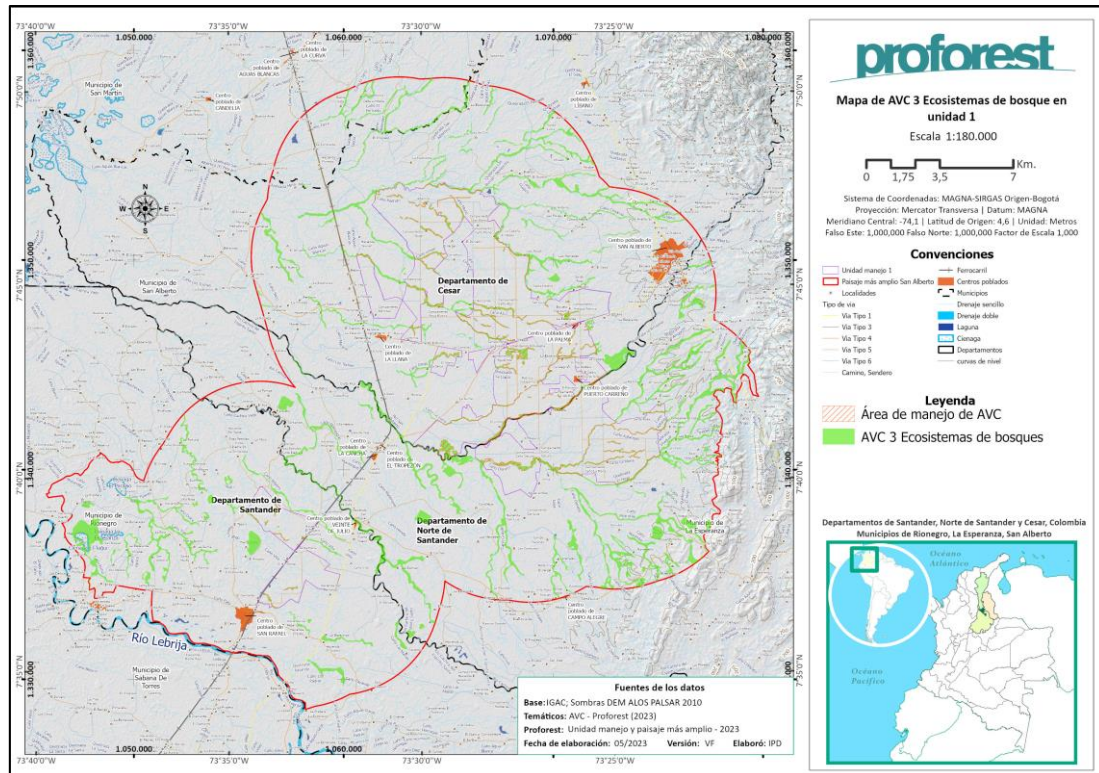
Map 2. HCV 1 Cebus versicolor in the management area and broader landscape.



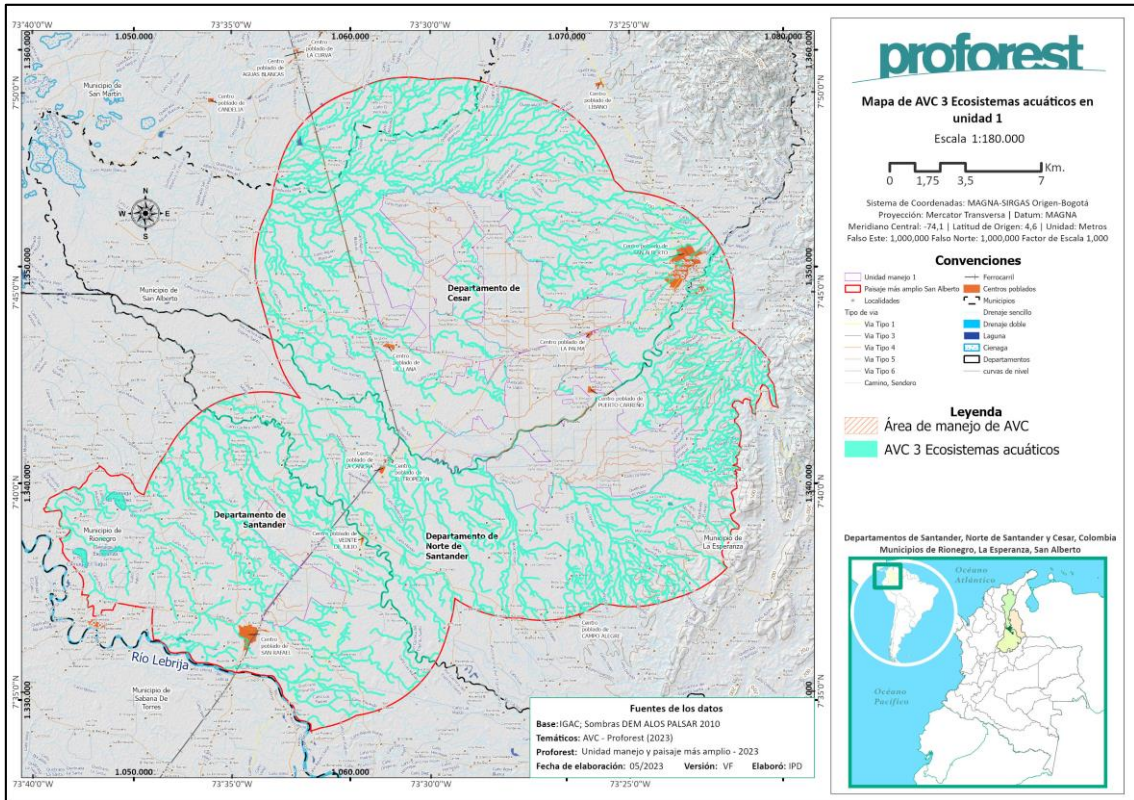
Map 3. HCV 1 Dendrobates truncatus in the management area and broader landscape.



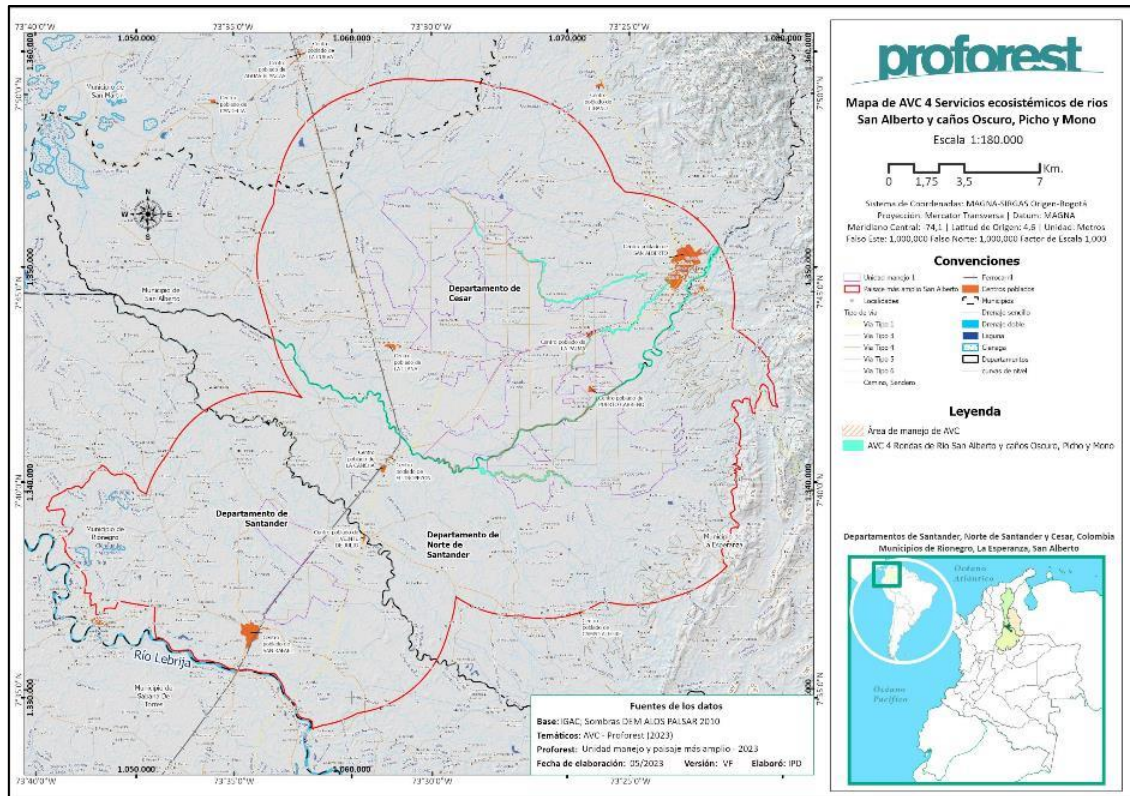
Map 4. HCV 1 Ortalis garrula identified in the management area and broader landscape.



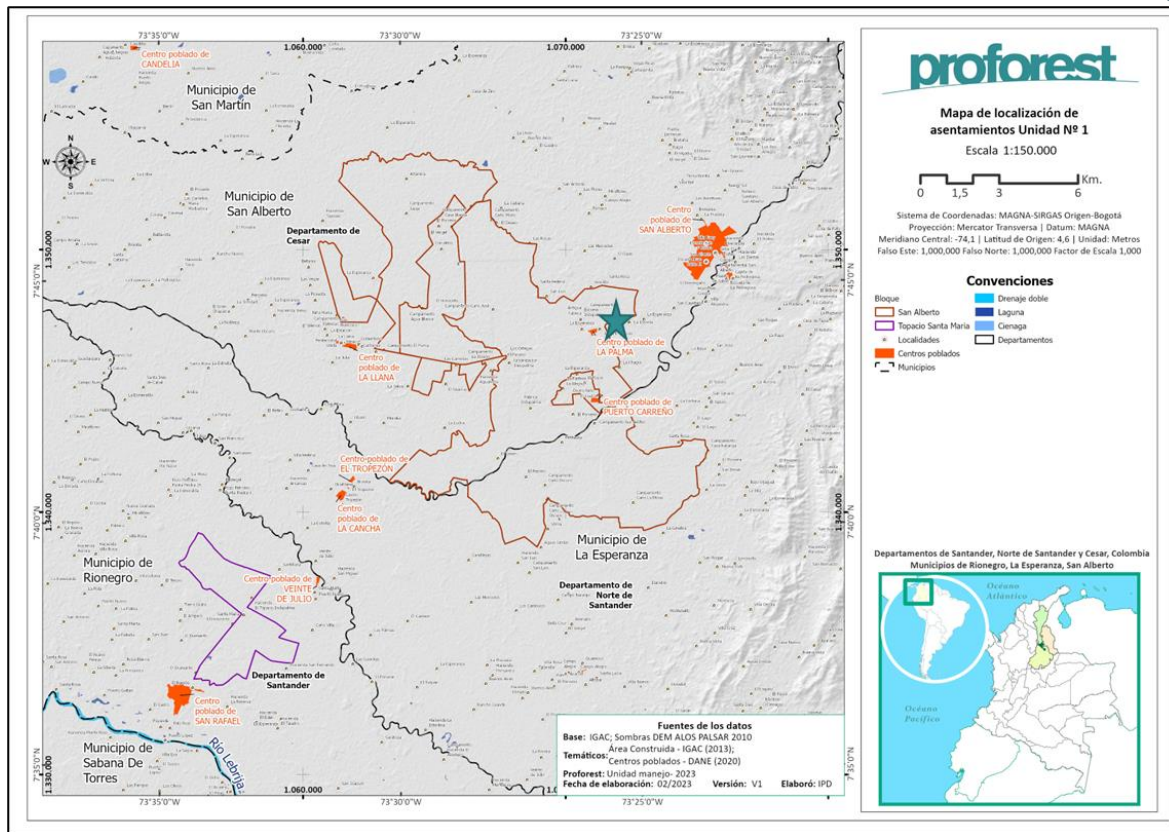
Map 5. HCV 3 forests area identified in the management area and broader landscape.



Map 6. HCV 3 aquatic ecosystems identified in the management area and broader landscape.



Map 7. HCV 4 area identified in the management area and broader landscape.



## 6. Findings, Management, and Monitoring Recommendations

HCV and HCS areas are directly linked to the study area's freshwater resources, which includes the management unit and its broader landscape. Therefore, it is paramount to implement measures that ensure the preservation and quality of these valuable water resources. It should be recognized that inadequate agricultural or industrial management practices within the property could potentially impact HCV 4, which is associated with various water bodies within the management unit and the HCS areas.

It is crucial to highlight that mapping HCV and HCS management areas is limited to the company's property. These areas consist of buffer zones along the banks of the San Alberto River, extending up to 30 meters. The establishment of these buffer zones serves to mitigate threats and minimize the risks of pollution or contamination to the water bodies identified as HCV 4. Furthermore, these buffer zones will function as linear biological corridors, facilitating the movement of fauna and connecting them to other forested areas within the broader landscape. Ultimately, this connectivity aims to provide access for wildlife to reach the main body of water, which in this case is the Magdalena River.

### 6.1 Summary of identified environmental and social values

It is important to specify that these data are preliminary:



<i>Environmental and social values to be preserved</i>	<i>HCV area (ha), where the values are located (only within the MU)</i>	<i>HCV management areas (ha) (only within the MU)</i>
HCS forest	457.33 ha	3,884.74 ha
Peat	N/A	N/A
HCV 1	523.01 ha	14,052.14 ha
HCV 2	N/A	N/A
HCV 3	457.33 ha	3,884.74 ha
HCV 4	135.91 ha	605.34 ha
HCV 5	1.5 ha	N/A
HCV 6	N/A	N/A
Local peoples' lands	N/A	N/A
<b>Net total (after subtracting overlaps):</b>	<b>523,51 ha</b>	<b>14,052.14 ha</b>

## 6.2 Cross-cutting recommendations

<b>Management measures</b>	<b>Monitoring measures</b>
Maintain a constant dialogue with those adjacent to the Palmas de San Alberto property to reach agreements on the care of the areas identified as HCV4 and HCS forests at the landscape level. This action could set a precedent for working together to protect the riparian forests associated with Río San Alberto and other bodies of water in the landscape.	Record the approaches with the neighbours and the agreements reached for conservation purposes. In addition, in the case of joint riparian forest protection activities, periodic joint patrols will be implemented to verify compliance with the agreements.
Socialize the environmental and social policies and commitments Palmas de San Alberto has with stakeholders concerning its natural areas identified as HCVs and HCSs. This communication can lead to partnerships with academia, local NGOs and/or social and environmental organizations to carry out joint work to comply with the protection of natural areas.	Record stakeholder approaches and agreements reached for conservation purposes. Evaluate agreements and progress annually to ensure close monitoring of joint actions progress.
Actively participate in local ecosystem conservation programs and manage, through Local Partnerships, the necessary resources to support these local activities.	Review annual participation evidence and evaluate its efficiency to make the necessary adjustments to the following year's participation and management plan.

## 7. Next steps for FPIC







The FPIC process is an ongoing and continuous endeavor that extends throughout the presence of the plantation in the area. It is crucial to emphasize the importance of consistently enhancing communication channels and maintaining direct dialogue with all stakeholders involved in the operations. By doing so, positive relationships can be fostered, goodwill can be generated with the neighboring communities, and the license to operate can be secured.

To continue the work done, the company should consider the following next steps:

- Submit and verify the HCV-HCS report.
- Confirm the need for external observers if required by the community.
- Initiate negotiations and action plans, management of HCV areas, etc.
- Generate minutes and formalize the agreement with the communities (if applicable) and neighbours, ideally signed by the parties' representatives.
- Implement the established agreements.
- Establish monitoring (participatory, benefits, mitigation plans, resolve conflicts, define periodicity).

## 8. Photographic record

The following collection of photographs showcases the visits to the company's installations and the workshops conducted in the field with the stakeholders.

<p>Howler monkey (<i>Alouatta seniculus</i>)</p> 	<p>Ringed kingfisher (<i>Megaceryle torquata</i>)</p> 
<p>Southern tamandua (<i>Tamandua tetradactyla</i>)</p> 	<p>Capuchin Monkey (<i>Cebus versicolor</i>)</p> 



Fisherman



Consultation with employees



Part of the evaluation team



Focus group with the local community







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