



Bita River

Report card

2016

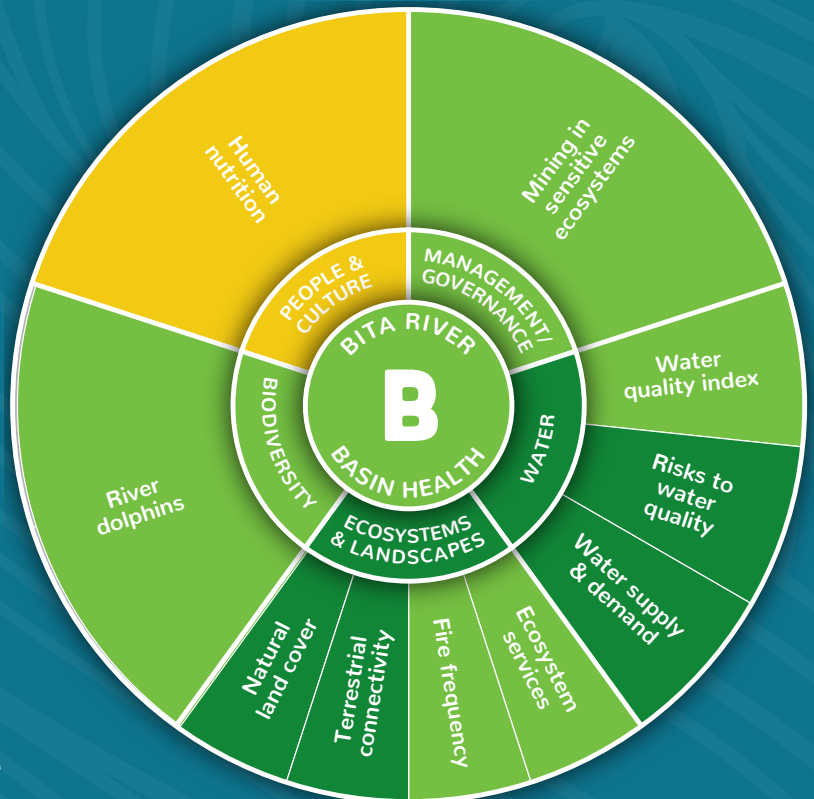


Characteristics of the Bita River Basin

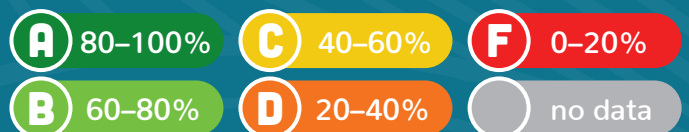
The Bita River Basin is one of the smallest tributaries to the Orinoco, rich in biodiversity and mostly undeveloped. The river originates in the Altillanura and stretches 623 km in length before flowing into the Orinoco. The basin includes many ecosystem types, with seasonal savannas as the main type, followed by flooded savannas and flooded gallery forests. The Bita River is a place of great natural beauty, but growing threats from agro-industrial activities and resource exploitation are changing the landscape.

The wonders of the Bita River are preserved

The Bita River Basin received an overall B grade (71%). Of the ten indicators assessed, most scored in the good-excellent range, except for a moderate score for the human nutrition indicator. Overall basin scores ranged from as low as 53% for human nutrition, to as high as 100% for risk to water quality, with water supply and demand, natural land cover, and terrestrial connectivity all excellent. The water quality score (64%) wasn't as high as expected considering the intact nature of the basin. This suggests that the expansion of industrialized agricultural and livestock projects are degrading water quality within the river basin.



What do the scores mean?



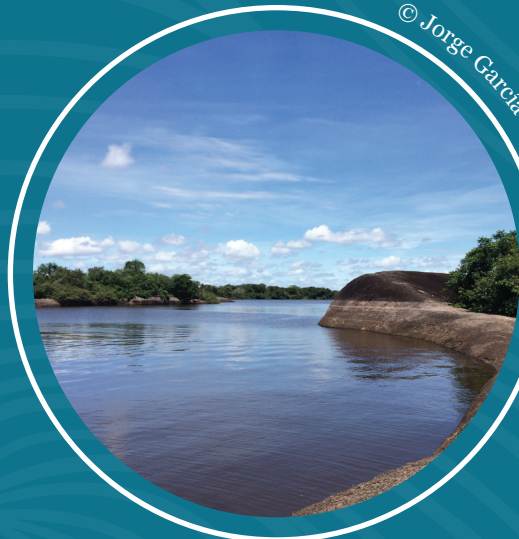
The gem of the Bita River: Bojonawi Natural Reserve

The Bojonawi Natural Reserve is located only 10 km from Puerto Carreño and is a popular place among locals and researchers interested in this region. The Omacha Foundation has been using this property since 2004 to promote the integrity and conservation of the ecosystems in the Bita and Orinoco rivers. Particularly important in the Reserve is the protection of key species such as river dolphins, turtles, and big cats. Bojonawi conserves ecosystems such as gallery forests, flooded forests, extensive savannas, morichales (palms), and the emblematic lake El Pañuelo (The Handkerchief).

© Fernando Trujillo - Omacha Foundation



© Jorge García - Omacha Foundation



A river dolphin (top), and the Bojonawi Natural Reserve (bottom).

The Bita: A river to protect

Currently the Bita River is under consideration to be the first river in Colombia to be legally protected by the government. Since 2014, this has been a goal of the Alliance for the Bita River, a group of institutions under the leadership of the Alexander von Humboldt Institute. With more than 400 animal species and 140 plant species, the richness of this river confirms that a conservation framework is not only warranted but necessary to improve planning decisions in the future. The Alliance for the Bita River has allowed different stakeholders to collaborate, share knowledge, and build capacity to protect the River and the surrounding territory. They hope that in the future this natural treasure can be preserved and protected for everyone in Colombia.

A need to **know more**

The **extensive biological diversity** found in the basin demands **significant investments in biodiversity assessments and monitoring** to supplement important yet fragmented biodiversity records. Recent field data collection efforts are a critical first step and require further data analysis to establish appropriate indicator thresholds. Additionally, information is needed on budget allocations for environmental issues, bush meat, illegal extraction of biological resources, the state of river-related cultural values, and ecotourism in order to include related indicators in subsequent report cards.

VALUES

BIODIVERSITY



MANAGEMENT/GOVERNANCE



ECONOMY



PEOPLE & CULTURE



FUTURE INDICATORS

MAMMAL RICHNESS



FLORA RICHNESS



FISH RICHNESS



BUSHMEAT



ILLEGAL HARVEST



ALLOCATED BUDGET



TOURISM



INDIGENOUS AREAS

