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Water in Cuba's System of Environmental Policies and Laws

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He was visiting professor of the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California and has lectured postgraduate courses in the Colegio de Ingenieros Civiles del Guayas, Guayaquil, Ecuador; the Universidad Técnica de Panamá; the Universidad del Atlántico, Barranquilla, Colombia; and in the Universidad de Los Andes, Mérida, Venezuela. He was a postdoctoral fellow at the Department of Civil Engineering, University of Toronto and currently participates in a joint research project with the University. He has published 67 scientific works, both nationally and internationally, and presented 63 papers in national and international congresses and conferences.

He obtained his Hydraulic Engineer degree at the University of Havana and gained his MS and PhD degrees from the Higher Polytechnic Institute "José A. Echeverría."

ABSTRACT

Cuba gives special attention to the protection of the environment, an expression of which is found in Article 27 of the Constitution of the Republic, which declares that:

The State protects the nation's environment and natural resources and recognizes their close relationship with sustainable economic and social development to make human life more rational and to ensure the survival, well being and security of present and future generations. It is the responsibility of proper governmental agencies to apply

this policy. It is the duty of the citizens to contribute to the protection of the water, atmosphere, and the conservation of soil, wild flora and fauna and all the rich potential of nature

Based upon the experience of the application of previous laws related to environmental protection and the rational use of natural resources, in June 1997 the National Assembly of Popular Power approved Law No. 81: Law of the Environment.

One of the basic legal principles of this law establishes that environmental management is integral, crosses all social sectors and requires the coordinated participation of state agencies and bodies, other entities and institutions, society and citizens in general, within their respective capabilities and jurisdictions.

Consequently water is thoroughly considered in the law. Title Six, devoted to specific spheres of environmental protection, includes Chapter IV: Water and Aquatic Ecosystems with three sections: General Requirements, Terrestrial Waters and Marine Waters and Resources. The National Institute of Hydraulic Resources is the body of the Central Administration of the State in charge of the protection of terrestrial waters, while mineral waters are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Basic Industry. The Ministries of Fishing Industry, Transportation and Agriculture in coordination with the National Institute of Hydraulic Resources are responsible for the protection of Marine Waters and Resources. Of course the Ministry of Public Health also plays an important role in this.

Additionally, in the Law there are many other sections related to water and environment in order to guarantee the comprehensiveness of the environmental actions for a sustainable management considered in the Law.

Water is also considered in the National Environmental Strategy as an expression of Cuban environmental policy.