

While the Ituango hydroelectric project's reservoir level continues to rise, EPM is continuing mitigation work in the municipalities downstream of the project

- **Permanent progress is being made via the mitigation tasks in riverine populations, including fish rescue, water supply safety, and ecosystem protection, among others**
- **Between this Sunday and Monday, the Cauca will have a normal channel for this time of year, characterized by an intense summer**
- **The flow of water through the landfill will not represent any type of risk to the communities**
- **The decision to close the second gate followed the basic premise of all activity related to the contingency plans: protect people's lives**

As the Ituango hydroelectric project's reservoir level, which by the end of this Thursday afternoon was approaching 400 meters above sea level, increases, anticipation is growing in the face of the gradual start of water discharge, activity

on the work front is ongoing to keep the community informed and mitigate the environmental impact.

The flow of water will be minimal once the spillway gates are opened, which was already tested during a smooth operation at the end of last year. Little by little, when the level of the reservoir rises, it will also gradually increase the amount of water that will pour into the Cauca River, based on flow rates of an intense summer season like what is being seen today throughout a large part of the country.

While this is happening, EPM continues with all activities laid out in the contingency plan. Here are some of them:

Fish fauna: 263,379 fish rescued and released. A total of 57,309 dead fish were found (most of them non-commercial or migratory species and of low weight) that were disposed by the authorized entities in the La Pradera landfill and in the Umagá deposit.

Safe water: To date, 780 cubic meters of water have been distributed to a population of 68,588 inhabitants.

Solid waste management: The use and adequate disposal of recoverable material is taking place. To date, 738 kilos have been properly disposed, mostly Cauca river fish biomass. Likewise, inspection of the river banks has started to collect waste and improve the environmental quality of the Cauca River.

Ecosystems: The monitoring of 16 marshes continues and 6 priority ones were dammed to prevent impact.

Economic activities: With a group of 21 professionals from EPM and the National University, the constant monitoring of the economic activities that have traditionally been developed in the river continues.

Risk management: The 10 PMUs (*Puestos de Mando Unificados* [Unified Command Posts]) installed in the municipalities continue. In each, interdisciplinary teams from the company were deployed to describe the unfolding of the operation, answer concerns, and open up conversations with stakeholders.

It is clarified that at this time, and since last Friday, February 1, the Salvajina reservoir, property of the EPSA company, is not discharging water to the Ituango hydroelectric project reservoir, although water will continue to flow from this reservoir to the Ituango hydroelectric project until Sunday, after a long journey from the municipality of Suárez, in the Cauca Department. This operation, which began on January 25, has been important to shorten the time compression of the flow of the Cauca River.

Meanwhile, the controlled discharge of water from the Porce II and Porce III power plants, which are owned by EPM, continues to mitigate the flow reduction in the Nechí river, a tributary of the Cauca, and thus contribute to the protection of the La Mojana marshes.

When hiring staff, priority was given to fishermen who have previously worked with the company on this type of activity, including monitoring, along the middle and lower river basins. For this purpose, consultations were held with local leaders, presidents of Community Action Boards, and presidents of fishermen's associations.

First, life

For EPM, the closure of the second catchment gate of the project was first and foremost about protecting the lives of the people downstream from the dam site.



EPM has continuously monitored different variables to avoid an early gate closure that could cause serious damage to the environment and the community. Given the impact that this decision could have before the water reached the level of the spillway, EPM requested that the engineering firm Integral, designer of the project, to carry out a detailed study on the state of the concrete structure and the catchment grate, which was delivered on February 4.

This report, together with other analyses, was decisive in deciding to close the gate in advance. It was thus attempted to avoid a loss of control of the flow that passes through the powerhouse and reaches Cauca, a situation that could seriously affect the community and have greater impacts on the environment in the long term.

Today, with the closing of the gate and the gradual increase in the height of the reservoir, in addition to the mitigation activities that are being carried out downstream of the project, the next step is to wait for the gradual and controlled discharge of water through the structure designed, built, and tested for this purpose. Once this goal is met, the river will return to its normal flow for this time of year.