

The Atoyac River is contaminated in a 98%: CONAGUA

Over the last two decades, the river showed an alarming increase in its contamination levels, so it was named a toxic river by the environmental organization Greenpeace.

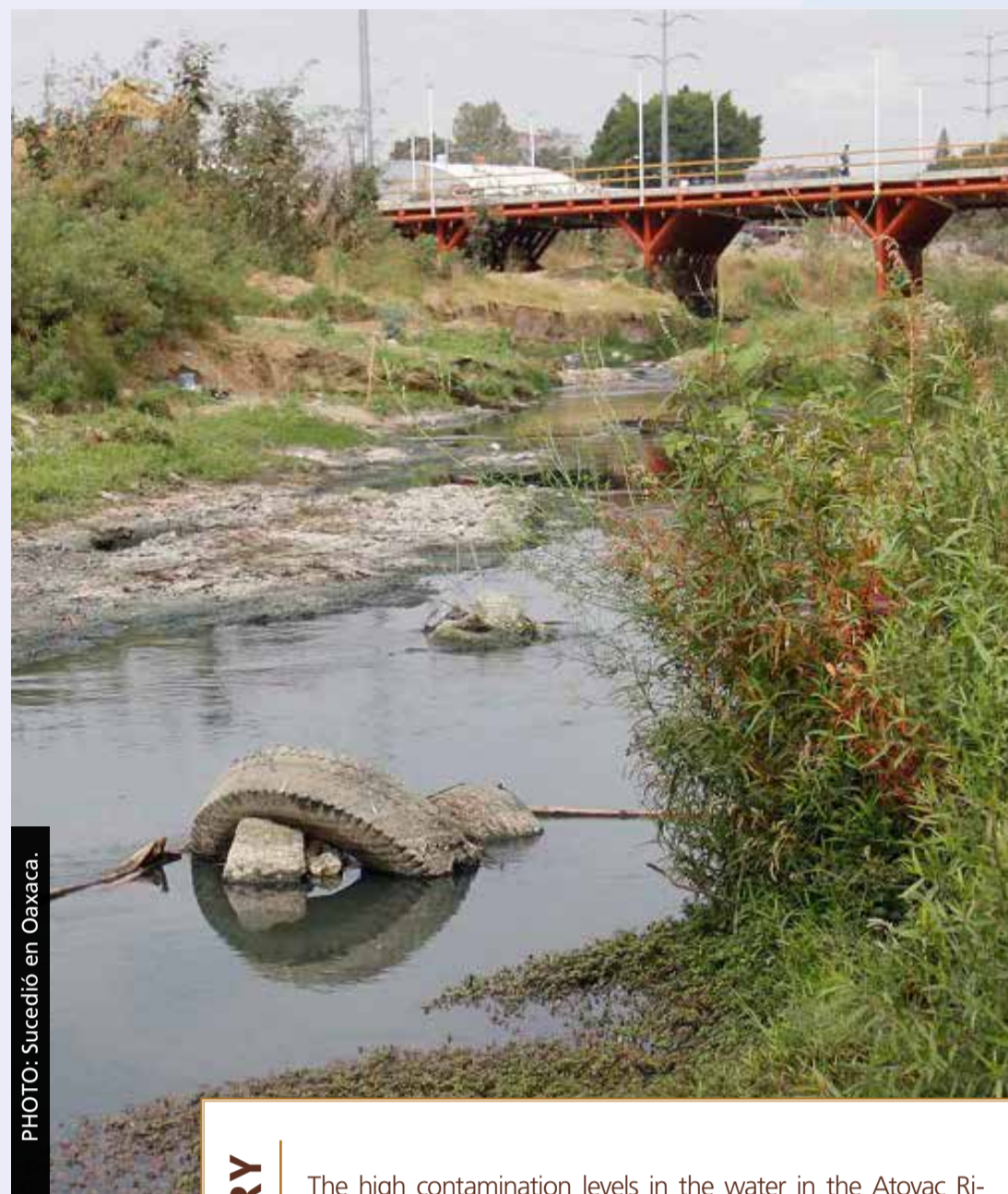


PHOTO: Sucedió en Oaxaca.

SUMMARY

The high contamination levels in the water in the Atoyac River have negative effects on public health and they encourage diseases like diarrhea, different infections on the stomach, kidneys, and skin. Additionally, they also encourage the deterioration of the food security after irrigating crops in the area.

Another consequence is the deterioration of food security, which also decreases productivity on the agricultural lands near the river. In addition, the quality of food is affected as people use water from the river to irrigate crops; which becomes a problem for public health too.

It is important to mention that the contamination in rivers has considerable effects on the loss of different species in the flora and aquatic fauna like fish, frogs, and ducks living in the area. However, it also affects birds, dogs, and cats; as they all drink water from the river.

Actions to support

Congregación Mariana Trinitaria (CMT), through its Welfare Ecosystem Model promotes the Network of Water and Environment to develop solutions and strategies so that vulnerable people in the country are able to have access to high-quality drinking water.

In rural communities with specific levels of social backwardness; rivers, lakes, and creeks are their only source to get water. Nevertheless, if they all are contaminated, they are not able to use it for domestic purposes. Then, CMT generates alliances with the different levels in the government with the objective of providing subsidies for families so that they are able to store rainwater using clean and safe ways.

Furthermore, CMT collaborates with governments and citizens to promote sanitation measures, and through different subsidies, the use of biodigesters and the domestic reuse of water are promoted. Also, the treatment of wastewater is possible through collaborative investments to have drainage networks available, and to build wastewater treatment plants.

Solutions CMT		
		
Water storage	Waste water treatment	Construction of drainage networks

The indicators of the quality of the water in the Rivers Atoyac and Salado, which flow in the municipality of Oaxaca de Juárez and the areas near to it; show that the water is highly contaminated. The Atoyac River is one of the most contaminated rivers in the country, the National Commission on Human Rights (CNDH) highlighted.

The basin of the Atoyac River is located in a high area in the Central Valleys in Oaxaca, and it flows through 30 municipalities located in that region.

Over the last two decades, the river suffered an alarming increase in its contamination levels, so the environmental association Greenpeace considered it as a toxic river.

The deterioration of the river is evident due to the high levels of pathogens, because the fecal coliforms produce bad smell and an extremely unpleasant aspect on the water. In addition, high levels of sulfides and industrial pollutants like copper, zinc, manganese, grease, and oil; a considerable amount of solid wastes, and many other wastes floating on it.



PHOTO: RIOaxaca.

It is estimated that 98 percent of the Atoyac River is contaminated, according to a report made by the organism "Cuenca Pacífico Sur", which is part of the National Water Commission (CONAGUA).

Main causes

Some of the main factors are the over-extraction of water in the surface to use it for people and plants, the waste waters coming from the near county seats that do not have any wastewater treatment plant (PTAR), as well as the ones coming from the areas whose treatment plant is not working properly; the National Water Commission reports.

Moreover, we have to consider the industrial wastes coming from the industries located near the river, which unconsciously throw their wastes to the river disregarding the previous treatments for them; which is also a determining factor to contaminate that water.

The lack of education to protect the environment becomes an important issue that contributes to the contamination of the river. People throw garbage to the river and into the areas near to it, besides they throw wastes, dead animals; and that all becomes a source of infections that harm human health; CONAGUA mentions.

In 2014, Greenpeace warned that 78 percent of the industries located in the basin of this river did not follow the recommendations to prevent the discharge of heavy metals into the water. Also, high levels of toxicity were found in 74 percent of the industries in the area; which contributed to worsen the problem.

Consequences

High contamination levels in the water of the Atoyac River have negative impacts on public health, due to the high levels of bacteria produced by human and animal feces. That issue also encourages the spread of bacterial diseases, diarrhea, infections in the stomach, kidneys, and skin; among many others.