

## EDITORIAL

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As this issue goes to press, we learn with deep regret of plans to construct a dam on the Usumacinta River at the Boca del Cerro, near the Mexican town of Tenosique. The consensus among those familiar with the region and the construction project is that, despite official reassurances, the dam will affect dramatically both the ecology and the archaeology of the Usumacinta zone. According to Jeffrey Wilkerson, who has reported on this development in a recent article in *The New York Times* as well as in a recently published paper (Wilkerson 1991:121), "virtually all of the dam configurations would flood portions of [Piedras Negras]," a Maya city of global cultural significance. Most tragic would be the loss at Piedras Negras of the South Group buildings, which are largely unexplored. The South Group is thought by some archaeologists to be the major locus of Early Classic occupation at the site. The dam would submerge this part of Piedras Negras, removing it forever from scholarly investigation. Another problem is the potential flooding of outlying settlement near the site. This too would be tragic, for little is known of settlement patterns in the region.

In our opinion, the construction of the dam poses an international problem with a serious impact not only on Mexico but on Guatemala. We urge all readers with an interest in Mesoamerican ecology and archaeology to express their opinions of

this unfortunate development to the appropriate government representatives or diplomatic officials. You may also wish to consider writing one or both of the following individuals:

Lic. Patricio Chirinos  
Secretario de Desarrollo Urbano y Ecología (SEDUE)  
Av. Constituyente 947  
Edificio B, Planta Alta  
Col. Belem de Las Flores  
Mexico, DF

Lic. Pedro Joaquin Coldwell  
Secretario de Turismo  
Av. Presidente Masaryk 172  
11587 Mexico, DF

### REFERENCE

- Wilkerson, S. Jeffrey K.  
1991 Damming the Usumacinta: The Archaeological Impact. In *Sixth Palenque Round Table, 1986*, edited by Merle Greene Robertson and Virginia M. Fields, pp. 118-134. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman.