

SUPPORTING INFORMATION I

FEATURES OF THE STUDY AREA AND ITS STRATEGIC ECOSYSTEMIC IMPORTANCE IN THE SOUTHERN COASTAL REGION OF BRAZIL

The Coastal Plain of Rio Grande do Sul state (RS) is represented by a close and long-range sedimentary area 70 km wide and 640 km long, which houses a lagoon-estuarine complex of great socioeconomic and environmental importance (Gianuca & Tagliani, 2012). Its Middle Coast region comprises conservation priority actions executed by the RS Biodiversity Project - *Projeto RS Biodiversidade* - RSBio (2012). This interinstitutional State project, co-funded by the World Bank, has been promoting biodiversity recovery and conservation of local rural practices by fomenting integrated ecosystem management, adoption of appropriate methods and opportunities for sustainable use of natural resources. One of the RSBio priority areas in the Middle Coast is the *Paurá* Lagoon, located north of the town of São José do Norte (Figure 1) and south of the *Lagoa do Peixe* National Park (LPNP) in the neighboring municipality of Tavares. This national park is considered an area of extreme ecological importance and priority for conservation by the Brazilian Ministry of the Environment (Ministério do Meio Ambiente, 2007). Alongside with that, LPNP is a site of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands - an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable utilization of wetlands. It is an important waterfowl habitat, which harbors also many diverse and productive aquatic fauna, including endangered fish species (Corrêa *et. al.* 2012; Pereira & Poerschke, 2010; Portz *et. al.*, 2011). This proximity allows for flora and fauna sharing, therefore highlighting the strategically value of the *Paurá* Lagoon region.