Climate and Tropical Forests

Protecting Tropical Forests to Reduce Global Carbon Emissions

The Nature Conservancy is catalyzing large-scale action to change the economic forces that make deforestation a leading cause of global carbon emissions.

Protecting Forests, Slowing Climate Change

Harboring 70 percent of the Earth's known species, tropical forests are extremely vulnerable habitats — with more than 40 million acres converted each year for agriculture and development. The destruction of these forests is a leading source of global greenhouse gas emissions. Without immediate action, most tropical forests will vanish in this century, with devastating consequences for both nature and humans.

The Nature Conservancy has made significantly reducing tropical deforestation a critical component of its global climate change strategy and is working to catalyze a global system of financial incentives that values the carbon stored in standing tropical forests while contributing to sustainable development and the protection of ecosystems upon which people depend.

Establishing a Forest Carbon Market

While recent studies have shown that reducing tropical deforestation is a cost-effective option for combating climate change quickly, historical efforts to tackle climate change (including policy frameworks like the Kyoto Protocol) have not addressed the value of preserving tropical forests as a way to reduce emissions. As a result, the protection of tropical forests is not valued in today's carbon marketplace.

Destruction of tropical forests accounts for almost twenty percent of global carbon emissions. © Mark Godfrey

Working with a broad range of partners, the Conservancy aims to demonstrate that financial incentives that put a value on standing tropical forests are a feasible and necessary climate policy option. Our strategy focuses on developing sound and credible approaches to measuring and monitoring carbon, building the capacity of developing

Demonstrating Progress

The Conservancy's demonstration programs in Brazil and Indonesia build on our core strength of local, science-based conservation and our long history in both countries.

Our scientific and conservation expertise is a critical asset to these projects, and they, in turn, offer us the opportunity to dramatically expand the impact of our work.

These projects help inform the public and leaders about effective global policies and economic mechanisms that will catalyze significant new forest conservation around the world.

Protecting tropical forests can significantly reduce the threat of climate change, while at the same time preserve important natural diversity and improve human well-being in developing countries around the world.

countries to establish forest carbon emissions reductions programs, and testing large-scale programs to compensate key countries for these efforts. This work will ultimately inform and support the development of a policy framework that will drive and govern the carbon marketplace.

Brazil

The state of Mato Grosso — encompassing 225 million acres of primary Amazon forest, cerrado, pantanal floodplain and transitional lands — has been the site of 40 percent of Brazil's deforestation in the past five years. In total, one third of the state has been converted, driven largely by the rapid expansion of the soy and cattle frontiers.

Yet momentum is growing to reverse these trends, and the promise of future carbon markets offers a further incentive for forest conservation efforts. The Conservancy, in collaboration with a wide array of partners, is contributing to the development of a government-sponsored pilot program that has the potential to significantly protect millions of acres of forest and avoid emissions of more than 500 million tons of carbon dioxide by 2015. A successful program in Mato Grosso is a critical step to garnering national support for similar efforts in other Brazilian states.

Indonesia

Indonesia boasts tremendous natural resources, including 220 million acres of forest. But forest exploitation and destruction in Indonesia has been rampant, due to pressures for wood products, oil palm, other agricultural products and development.

Yet Indonesia's forest sector has begun to come under strong pressure from international buyers and lenders, communities, and local governments looking for more sustainable land uses. The Conservancy has been invited to join a large effort of international and local partners each adding specialized expertise to develop a national framework for reducing emissions, linked to future carbon markets. If successful, these efforts will substantially reduce the loss of more than one million hectares of forest and cut emissions by several hundred million tons per year.

Above: Incentives are needed to keep tropical forests intact. © Mark Godfrey. Above right: Healthy forests can contribute to healthy livelihoods. © John Maier.

CAMPAIGN *for a* SUSTAINABLE PLANET

The fate of nature lies in the hands of humans worldwide. Our vision of hope and action can protect nature and preserve life.

We need your support.

The Nature Conservancy

Protecting nature. Preserving life.™

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