
THE PINCHOT LETTER

News from the Pinchot Institute for Conservation

Vol. 8, No. 1 Spring 2003

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF PARTNERSHIP WITH THE USDA FOREST SERVICE

1963 🌿 2003

*Dedicated by former President John F. Kennedy, Jr. at Grey Towers National Historic Landmark
to carry forward Gifford Pinchot's forest conservation legacy.*

Tropical Sustainable Forestry: A New Community Forestry Program in Northwestern Ecuador

In conjunction with the Milford (Pennsylvania) Experimental Forest, the Pinchot Institute established a project last year to support community forestry in the northern coastal plain of Ecuador. The project—intended to sustain the forestlands in that region and spark economic development—is a partnership between the Pinchot Institute and four other organizations: the U.S. Peace Corps, the USDA Forest Service, Fundacion Jatun Sacha (Ecuador's largest conservation non-governmental organization), and a network of rural communities practicing sustainable forestry in northwestern Ecuador. The partners have created a pilot project in the commu-

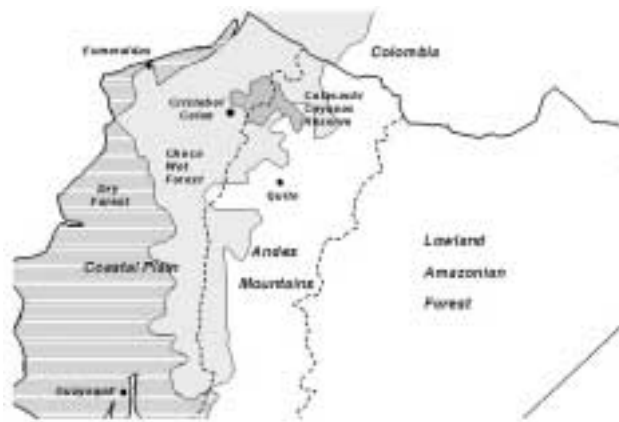
nity of Cristobol Colon, with 300 families that together own 45,000 hectares (about 111,150 acres) of wet tropical forests in the foothills of the Andes.

The northern coastal plain of Ecuador is one of the most threatened biodiversity hotspots in South America, with less than 3% of its original forests still remaining. A study by Botanist Alwyn Gentry of a 200-hectare forest stand found over 1,000 plant species—more than half of which are woody plants, and many endemic to that region. Meanwhile, small communities of colonists and indigenous peoples struggling with persistent poverty own much of the

forestland that has not yet been converted to banana, coffee, and oil palm plantations. In many of these communities, since the markets for agricultural crops such as coffee, bananas, and milk have failed, the economic lifeline for farmers is selling wood harvested from their primary forests.

During the last decade, USAID and other funders have made large investments to encourage sustainable forestry in rural communities in this region. The ten-year Sustainable Uses for Biological Resources (SUBIR) project, the most ambitious of these programs, was successful in helping communities gain legal title to their lands and pioneer a simple, but effective

(continued on page 2)



Cristobol Colon, a community of 300 families located 45,000 hectares adjacent to the 200,000 hectare Cotacachi-Cayapas Reserve close to Colombia, South America

INSIDE

- 🌿 **Part II: Asset Management Approach**page 5
- 🌿 **Rocky Roads in Rocky Top?**page 7
- 🌿 **Conservation and the Arts**page 16
- 🌿 **Part II: Letter of Final Instructions**page 22

Leadership in Forest Conservation Thought, Policy and Action

tive, approach to sustainable forest management that works well in a community setting. However, despite this important work, little progress has been made in translating good forestry into economic development that addresses the underlying reasons for deforestation.

The Pinchot Institute became involved in Ecuador through a Peace Corps volunteer, David Smith, who worked for several years with the Milford Experimental Forest on community deer management and other forestry projects. David went to

Ecuador with a copy of Gifford Pinchot's *Primer of Forestry*, which was written in response to the North American period of forest exploitation that parallels the rapid loss of primary forests in South America today.

The community forestry project in Ecuador is a direct example of the application of the principles of forest conservation defined by Gifford Pinchot a century ago. Pinchot described good forestry as the ability to "use and preserve the forest at one and the same time." Moreover, he stressed that conservation meant that "natur-

al resources must be developed and preserved for the benefit of the many, and not merely for the profit of a few." This was a socially progressive notion that lay at the heart of the coalition of interests that defined the first American conservation revolution.

In Ecuador, Smith soon recognized that Cristobol Colon would continue to exploit its forests until families could make a decent living by managing them sustainably. Furniture

(continued on page 3)

ABOUT THE PINCHOT INSTITUTE

Recognized as a leader in forest conservation thought, policy and action, the Pinchot Institute for Conservation was dedicated in 1963 by President John F. Kennedy, Jr. at Grey Towers National Historic Landmark (Milford, PA)—home of conservation leader Gifford Pinchot. The Institute is an independent nonprofit organization that works collaboratively with all Americans nationwide—from federal and state policymakers to citizens in rural communities—to strengthen forest conservation by advancing sustainable forest management, developing conservation leaders, and providing science-based solutions to emerging natural resource issues. Further information about the Pinchot Institute's programs and activities can be found at www.pinchot.org.

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The Pinchot Letter is a tri-annual publication of the Pinchot Institute for Conservation. Contributing writers: Pinchot Institute and Grey Towers staff; Julian Block, JD, LL.M.; Peter & Nancy Pinchot

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 Designer: Peter Lindeman, OSP Inc., Arlington, VA

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Cattle pasture, coffee and cacao plantation: three failing crop markets.

manufacturers pay community members about \$0.10 per foot for rough-sawn boards. At these prices, even when farmers cut as many trees as they can, their families still make considerably less than \$1,000 per year selling their lumber wholesale. Given this, there is little chance of making a lasting transition to sustainable forestry practices, and the remaining forests will probably continue to be converted to unsustainable agricultural enterprises. This was exactly the kind of situation Pinchot was addressing in his exhortation that conservation must provide benefits to the “common person” if it is to succeed as a policy.



Segundo Moreno milling a hardwood tree into rough-sawn boards with a chainsaw. Such technique leaves over 50% of the usable wood wasted in the forest and greatly increases the rate of harvest for the same economic return.

Shortly after he arrived in Cristobol Colon, David Smith asked the Milford Experimental Forest—a program of the Pinchot Institute that uses the Pinchot family’s Pennsylvania forest as a testing ground for sustainability issues that can be applied elsewhere—to help him develop an innovative pilot to address the problems faced by his community. Thus the partnership between the Peace Corps, USDA Forest Service, Fundación Jatun Sacha, the community network, and the Pinchot Institute was formed. The pilot study will explore how to help the community cut fewer trees and return a greater profit to its members by developing cooperative businesses in the value-added processing and marketing of wood products.

Last December, the Institute raised \$70,000 from private donors to purchase appropriately scaled tools to allow the community to begin producing finished wood products. The tools include a portable bandsaw sawmill, a kiln powered by solar energy and wood heat, a diesel generator, a planer/molder and other carpentry tools, and an outboard motor and logging arch to transport wood to the sawmill.

Once the tools are delivered to the community, the bulk of the project will focus on technical assistance to help them learn the skills of sustainable forest management, production and marketing of high-value wood products, and business management. A critical element of the project will be to create the institutional capacity in Ecuador to train and mentor community members in marketing and business development.

The project has five components:

Forest management. Assistance in developing forest management plans and training paraforesters within the community who can assume many of the functions of a forester.



Portable bandsaw sawmill with a kerf narrower than a chainsaw, these saws can cut smaller diameter material, thereby greatly increasing the marketable yield from each tree.

Agroforestry. Assistance in developing model agroforestry plots to reforest failing agricultural lands with a wide diversity of short-term crops and forest trees.

Wood product development. Study of the wood properties of the hundreds of tree species and the development of simple wood products that have a potential market. Training community members in the use of the sawmill, kiln, and carpentry tools to produce high-quality products.

Marketing. Initial assistance in selecting several products that the community can make and sell right away, and then carrying out an extensive marketing study of the most profitable products produced by their skills and wood species, both for Ecuadorian markets and eventually, for international markets.

Business management. Training community members in the basic skills of running a viable business, including business plans, accounting, credit management, etc.

The US Peace Corps has placed two volunteers in Cristobol Colon (one in community forestry, the other in business management), and has made an atypical commitment to continue placing volunteers there for five

(continued on page 4)

years to ensure the success of the pilot project. Next year, two more volunteers will be placed in adjacent communities to help these areas adapt the lessons learned in Cristobol Colon. Fundacion Jatun Sacha will be the lead organization in delivering technical assistance and mentoring, and will hire for two new positions—a marketing specialist and a part-time business management trainer—to sustain these initiatives.

The USDA Forest Service is providing the design for the solar kiln and assistance in identifying the properties and potential uses for the large diversity of tree species in Ecuador's coastal plain. The Pinchot Institute is helping to create the vision for the project, convening the partners, raising funds, and providing research and as-

sistance in value-added processing, marketing, and community forestry.

In subsequent years, the partners plan to translate the results of the pilot project to other areas of the community forestry network and to an assemblage of indigenous communities in the Ecuadorian Amazon. The ultimate goal is to help reverse the loss of forests in this region by providing communities with the tools and skills to build a viable local economy based on sustainable management of their working forests.

Past achieving that goal, there are several policy issues arising from this pilot project that could evolve into future policy studies for the Pinchot Institute. For example, a critical question for tropical forestry is how

to provide financial incentives for reforestation by the small landowners who own vast areas of failing agricultural lands. Emerging carbon sequestration markets may provide a tremendous new opportunity to pay farmers to plant new forests, but as with certification, there will be great challenges in translating this financial opportunity down to the scale of the many thousands of farmers who own 20 or 40 hectares of farmland.

We will keep you posted on new developments in our community forestry program in Ecuador. For more information or to offer suggestions, please contact Al Sample at (202) 797-6580, alsample@pinchot.org or Peter Pinchot at (570) 296-9313, peterpin@aol.com.

PARTNERING THROUGH THE CFC

Considering the reality of the current marketplace, we realize that now, more than ever, we need to diversify our base of financial support, begin establishing relationships with new friends who recognize the value of our work, and build an endowment to ensure that our programs can continue to impact forest policies and conservation. Your fully tax-deductible gift made through the current *Combined Federal Campaign* (CFC) can help us do this, plus much more.

By ensuring that we have well-maintained forests, your gift also helps our nation to have cleaner air, better quality water, reduced pollution and toxic substances, sustainable timber, more affordable energy resources and supplies of fish, and properly maintained rivers, beaches, and shorelines. In turn, this gives us more opportunities for outdoor recreation, an abundant quantity and variety of wildlife, and affordable grazing lands and soil conservation for our animals.

Please don't forget us. With over 3,000 nonprofits participating annually in the CFC campaign, we want to make sure that we can continue to fund our efforts—work that directly supports yours. Only by working together can we spread the roots of forest conservation.

For more information on how to contribute through the CFC and ensure that you're kept informed of our work and exciting events at Grey Towers, please contact Kendra Miller at 202-797-6580 or kmiller@pinchot.org.



Pinchot Institute for Conservation: a new member of the Conservation and Preservation Charities of America federation. Check your guide for our new charity number.