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GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE: LAC/RSD

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Through its leadership and support, particularly with the Parks in Peril program, LAC/RSD has conserved important biodiversity and improved management of natural resources. These ongoing efforts in the Latin America and Caribbean region are helping countries overcome development challenges and confront serious environmental issues.

Background. Over the past several years, the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region has faced increasing development challenges, including insufficient economic growth rates, growing unemployment, extensive poverty, and skewed income distribution that continues to undermine the economic and political stability of the region.

Despite successes in introducing new technologies for clean production in industry and improved practices in park and protected areas management, the environment in the LAC region suffers from accelerating rates of severe degradation. This degradation is evident in the death of many coastal reefs, eroded watersheds, and polluted water. It causes increased vulnerability to disasters and health problems, conflicts over natural resources, and reduced economic opportunities.

Therefore, key environmental sectors for the Office of Regional Sustainable Development in USAID's Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC/RSD) include forestry, biodiversity, coastal/marine resources, water resources, industry, energy, and natural disasters, all of which are inherently linked to and address global climate change.

LAC/RSD is responsible for providing technical leadership, regional expertise, and advice in the areas of environment, democracy and participation, economic growth, population/health, and human resources/education in the LAC region. The purpose of the LAC regional program is to support and strengthen critical U.S. national interests in the LAC region that are beyond the scope of bilateral and subregional programs. The regional program focuses on development activities that:

- Address critical regional needs that cannot be filled by bilateral or subregional programs
- Support Hemispheric Summit mandates
- Support pilot and other innovative activities such as regional alliances that field missions typically would not fund
- Support congressionally mandated initiatives that are managed most efficiently at the regional level

Sector-Specific Climate Change Activities. The LAC/RSD Environment Team oversees two regional programs:

- Parks in Peril – This \$30 million project is aimed at improving the management of LAC parks and reserves that contain globally significant biodiversity. The project works strategically to strengthen

Major partners in LAC/RSD's climate change activities include*:

- The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
- World Resources Institute (WRI)
- Parks in Peril implementing partners, including the Center for Environmental Rights and the Promotion of Development (Nicaragua), Fundacion Amigos de la Naturaleza (Bolivia), Fundacion Antisana (Ecuador), Pronatura Noreste (Mexico), Pro Naturaleza (Peru), and South Trelawny Environmental Agency (Jamaica)

* Because partners change as new activities arise, this list of partners is not comprehensive.

environmental policy and builds partnerships and alliances for conservation. The program is implemented in partnership with The Nature Conservancy (TNC).

- LAC Environmental Partnership – This \$5 million partnership seeks to promote the adoption of environmentally sound and economically competitive production practices in forestry, mining, food processing, and various industries, with a focus on helping industries in the region meet the higher environmental standards of the rapidly expanding global marketplace. Several partners are involved in implementing this program.

Parks in Peril. Of the two programs, Parks in Peril (PiP) is USAID's flagship program and has been instrumental in not only conserving biodiversity and improving protected area management but also in helping to mitigate the effects of climate change in the region. PiP has been a leader in innovative financing mechanisms throughout the region, utilizing techniques such as water fees, conservation easements, carbon sequestration, and private lands conservation. By conserving natural habitats on more than 29 million hectares, PiP contributes to the avoidance of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions due to conversion of natural habitats. Three PiP sites currently have carbon sequestration projects and more sites are looking to emulate these models. Furthermore, the PiP program is responsible for strengthening over 30 local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), which are now national voices for the environment.

Over the 11 years of the PiP project, TNC and its partners have leveraged over \$360 million for conservation in Latin America and the Caribbean, including \$12 million from the U.S. government (in addition to USAID funding), \$50 million from private donors, and \$252 million from multilateral development banks. Since this funding supports the conservation of natural habitat, it contributes to the mitigation of carbon dioxide emissions, whether the funding is designated for a PiP site or for conservation policy change.

PiP Climate Change Mitigation Activities – Accomplishments. Through its focus on improved park management and better land use planning in the protected areas where it works, the PiP program continues to make substantial progress in reducing GHG emissions. Specific activity accomplishments include:

- Establishing several new conservation units in LAC countries, including Brazil and Honduras
- Increasing institutional presence of PiP partners at the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta National Park in Columbia
- Declaring and expanding protected areas (the El Ocote Reserve in Mexico, for example, which was declared a Biosphere Reserve and expanded from 53,000 to 101,200 hectares), coupled with an increase of 1.4 million hectares protected

- Raising awareness of options to make development more compatible with conservation, including policy changes and pilot projects for payment for environmental services
- Providing training to government organizations and NGOs to strengthen protected area management and promote the use of sustainable production techniques
- Using geographic information systems (GIS) to map biodiversity, monitor threats, and reinforce regulatory strategies
- Hosting conferences and fostering dialogue between local and international parties involved in private lands conservation and implementing the first conservation easements on private lands in several countries
- Increasing public awareness on conservation and protection issues, such as fire prevention and management

PiP Climate Change Mitigation Policy – Accomplishments. Improving the policy framework for conservation has a direct bearing on managers' ability to enhance the quantity and health of a site's natural resources and the considerable carbon stocks contained in these resources. Conservation policy work also plays an important role in the PiP program, both with respect to identifying and working to change national and local policies that undermine conservation at PiP sites and to implementing PiP tools and methodologies.

Examples of policy accomplishments include:

- Strengthening inter-institutional agreements to support ecological fire management
- Codifying management plans and conservation ideas into laws
- Establishing local advisory councils for participatory management of protected areas
- Proposing the administrative and legal structure for an ecological corridor connecting Bolivian protected areas for migratory species
- Developing and implementing studies and analyses of current and potential policy actions related to private lands, water, climate change, and financial mechanisms throughout LAC
- Facilitating the agreement between the governments of Honduras and Nicaragua to prepare a binational environmental agenda for the protection and management of the Mosquitia Region
- Establishing comanagement agreements between indigenous communities and park authorities

For more information on LAC/RSD's climate change activities, visit the USAID Web site at:

- <http://www.usaid.gov>