

NCI Signs Loan-for-Use Agreement with Municipality of Loja



A loan-for-use agreement was signed on July 23, 2008 between NCI and the Municipality of Loja through which NCI turned over the management of the administration of two properties located in the El Carmen micro-watershed, the principal water supply source for the city. The total area of the properties is 915 acres. This agreement has a duration of ten years, with the purpose of enabling the Municipality as "Borrower" to develop a number of activities including:

conservation and recovery of natural vegetation cover, reforestation with forest species native to the site, protection methods such as wire fences, live fences, etc., scientific research, monitoring and signage, environmental education, and control of forest fires.

These areas are part of the buffer zone of Podocarpus National Park, and in addition to protecting Loja's water supply; they conserve the great diversity and endemism of the humid cloud forest. The management of these areas will be accomplished with money raised through the Ordinance for the protection of micro-watersheds and other priority conservation areas in the canton of Loja. Thanks to the joint work of the Municipality and NCI, more than 4,500 acres (60% of the area of interest) is under protection.

Film about the Impact of the Cultivation of Corn in Dry Forests

The biological richness of the dry forests of Ecuador has been threatened by the high prices of corn, due especially to the international demand for ethanol as a biofuel and to the damages caused by unusual climatic phenomena. Besides the deforestation of many hectares of forest that occurred between 2006 and 2008, the negative impacts in the communities caused by such items as access to cultivated land,



use of agrochemicals, loss of native varieties of corn, and cultural changes due to increased economic income, are also very significant. For this reason and thanks to the enthusiasm of Steve Schutz, this problem was documented in a video that denounces the terrible effects that biofuels are causing for nature and society. For this documentary, Ivan Gayler and members of NCI's staff toured the southern part of Ecuador filming some of the conservation areas and activities of NCI in the zone.

The video can be viewed at:

<http://www.ethanol-lie.com>

Legalization of Territories and Legal Recognition of Shuar Communities in the Podocarpus-El Cóndor Biosphere Reserve

The Shuar people have inhabited a large part of Southern Ecuador for the past 600 years. Ancestrally these people have been strongly tied to the forests, rivers, and waterfalls, and possess an extraordinary knowledge of the biodiversity and the management of the territory. In the past 60 years, the Shuar have suffered the pressure of an economic system that has encouraged the colonization of their territories, with the consequential problems of deforestation and degradation of their culture. After the recognition of a large part of the Shuar territories as a Biosphere Reserve in 2007, NCI signed cooperation agreements with the Shuar Federation of Zamora-Chinchi (FEPNASH-ZCh) to claim territorial rights and maintain their culture. This joint work has begun to show its initial results.

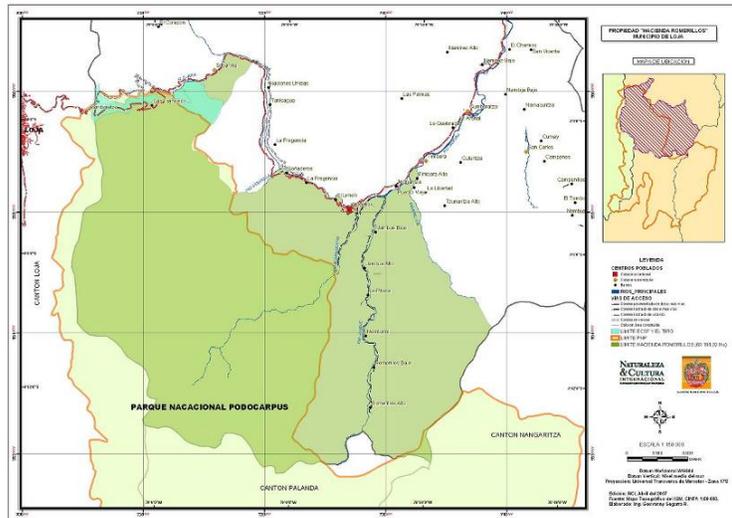
Thanks to the support of NCI, the Ecuadorian Ministry of the Environment on May 19, 2008 declared three Protected Forest and Vegetation Areas with a total surface of 37,420 acres in Yacuambi, Zamora Chinchi province.

The Council for Development of the Nationalities and Peoples of Ecuador (Codenpe), has just officially recognized 9 additional Shuar indigenous communities in the watershed of the River Nangaritza. This measure legally accredits the existence of these communities and guarantees them a series of rights, benefits, and protection on the part of the State. The territories of these communities total nearly 40,000 acres of space for the survival of the Shuar and ecosystems rich in biological diversity.



Hacienda Romerillos: An important Opportunity to Conserve Podocarpus National Park

The Municipality of Loja asked NCI to provide technical support to conserve the forests of “Hacienda Romerillos”. This area of 185,000 acres has been a property of the municipality since 1934 and currently includes urban spaces, cropland, natural forests, and páramo. The information compiled by NCI found that nearly half of the hacienda is part of Podocarpus National Park and that other areas of natural forest in the Hacienda (approximately 31,500 acres) could be integrated into this protected area if the Municipality of Loja and the Ministry of the Environment approve. In the coming months, local authorities will determine the most adequate mechanisms for the management and conservation of the territory, based on information provided by NCI.



New areas in Dry Forest



The Cazaderos – Progreso area in Zapotillo county, is by far the most pristine area of Dry Forest in Ecuador and still maintains connectivity with the Northwest Biosphere Reserve of Peru. We found species that are rare or have already disappeared in other areas like the American crocodile, Mantled Howler Monkey, Peccary, Boa constrictor, deer, pumas and many of the most threatened bird species of the region. According to

the botanist Eduardo Cueva, there exist a number of new registers for Ecuador and some possibilities for new plant species.

Only 50 families are settled in the entire region, using mostly the lower parts for cattle grazing, goats, and small plots of crops. Unfortunately the area is very threatened by the enlargement of corn-growing areas that have already caused the deforestation of the eastern side of the range. All the properties are private and have appropriate land titles.

The area we have measured with the owners so far is 15,750 acres within a potential area of 25,000 acres.

