



Latin America Conservation Council: Bold Ideas for Creating a Sustainable Future

The Council and The Nature Conservancy celebrated four years of collaboration, building and promoting innovative models that balance development and conservation to meet our growing need for water, food and infrastructure.

Alta Floresta, Brazil. December 1, 2015. — Led by co-chairs Henry M. Paulson, Jr. and Roberto Hernández, the **Latin America Conservation Council (LACC)** convened at a location in the Amazon forest to review the solid progress made on the Council’s ambitious, multi-year agenda with the Nature Conservancy around Water Security, Sustainable Food and Smart Infrastructure.

The Council held a series of meetings first in Brasilia with government and other leaders, learning about Brazil’s land registration system that has helped to reduce deforestation by 80% in one vulnerable region of the country. One official talked about the “huge debt” Brazil owes to The Nature Conservancy (TNC) for its “crazy idea” back in 2009 to stop deforestation by registering rural properties and their forest cover using satellite images. This “crazy idea” evolved into the country’s innovative land registry system and is now the law of the land, setting a new standard of accountability and transparency in deforestation control. Other discussions with government leaders explored partnering to employ similar state-of-the-art tools and technologies to ensure sustainable infrastructure development, for instance in the Tapajós River Basin.

NORMALLY THERE WOULD BE QUOTES FROM HANK, ETC.

“As we enter our fifth year, we can see our science-based solutions beginning to show real results,” said Joe Keenan, the Nature Conservancy’s executive vice president and lead on the LACC partnership. “And we can also now see pretty clearly what other levers we need to pull to get these results to a scale that truly matters for the future of the planet. The stature and commitment of the members of this Council allow us to aspire to that.”

HANK: I would make a comment and then ask a question. Of all the projects I have seen, this is the best because it really makes the connection between biodiversity in the forest, the economic need to fund conservation, and a key development challenge.

(for instance)

Specific initiatives the LACC and TNC have under way in Latin America include:

- Creating public-private **water funds** to generate sustainable investment flows for restoring the most important rivers and watersheds in Latin America, focusing on the 25 most at-risk cities across the region and with the potential to bring cleaner water to 80 million urban residents, including 12 cities in Brazil that will require the large-scale restoration of the Atlantic Forest to increase their water security.
- Designing large-scale conservation programs that simultaneously boost food production, for example in cattle-ranching landscapes where investments in pasture intensification can increase yields on a much smaller production footprint – called “go-zones” – allowing for the lasting protection of natural forests and



grasslands – called “no-go zones.” Signature projects for this effort include São Feliz do Xingú in the Brazilian Amazon, the Yucatán Peninsula in Mexico, and ranching areas of Colombia, among others.

- Optimizing dam siting in Latin America’s large river systems via **hydropower-by-design** analyses, steering impacts away from areas of highest biodiversity and maximizing river connectivity while also meeting energy production needs. These pilot projects are being explored in areas like Mexico’s Coatzacoalcos River, the iconic Magdalena River in Colombia and Brazil’s Tapajós River, where the objective is to ensure that the Juruena branch of the river system remains free-flowing.

After meetings in the capital, the Council made a visit to a magnificently preserved portion of the Amazon in Mato Grosso state. Gathering with their spouses and some Conservancy staff, Council members renewed their commitment to nature by visiting an 800-year-old tree, viewing dozens of species of birds, and traveling by boat along the Tapajos headwaters.

Council Members talked about reaching out to other key players in industry, government and academia to build the movement needed to integrate conservation with development, seeking to make the Region a leader in this regard globally.

In discussions throughout the visit, a consensus emerged that the market and financial know-how of global business leaders, combined with the technical rigor and ingenuity of Conservancy scientists and partners, are a powerful combination for identifying and implementing the next generation of bold ideas needed to build a sustainable future for Latin America.

About the Latin America Conservation Council (LACC)

The Latin America Conservation Council (LACC) is an unprecedented group of business, political and financial leaders dedicated to accelerating the science-based solutions of The Nature Conservancy, in three specific areas critical for conservation and development: Water Security Sustainable food and Smart Infrastructure. The Council has about 30 Members who provide advice, networking, advocacy and financial support to scale sustainable models in Latin America. Visit: www.nature.org/LACC

About The Nature Conservancy (TNC)

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is the largest environmental organization in the world, respected for its non-confrontational approach. The Conservancy’s mission is to protect the land and waters upon which all life depends. The Conservancy has over one million members and has managed to protect more than 50 million acres in Latin America, Asia, the Caribbean, and the Pacific. Visit: www.nature.org

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