

Latin America Conservation Council Celebrates 5 Years of Action for Creating a Sustainable Future

The Council and The Nature Conservancy celebrated five years of collaboration -- building and promoting innovative models that balance development and biodiversity conservation while meeting our growing need for water, food and infrastructure.

Oaxaca, Mexico. December 1, 2016. —Henry M. Paulson, Jr. and Roberto Hernández, co-chairs of the **Latin America Conservation Council (LACC)**, led this year’s annual meeting in Oaxaca, Mexico, to review progress on innovative collaborations between the Nature Conservancy and Member organizations over the past five years. The Council focuses on the themes of Water Security, Sustainable Food and Smart Infrastructure, and the meeting celebrated solutions being deployed to date and proposed 2020 outcomes to build on successes achieved so far.

“If you look back objectively, you see 20 water funds ...mapping millions of acres in Brazil, even mapping entire watersheds to look at trade-offs for developing hydropower in a river system,” Paulson observed “Some impressive things have been done. But I worry that we may be winning some important battles while losing the environmental war. Looking back and reflecting on the past and thinking about the future are what this meeting is about.” The Council resolved to raise the visibility of their public-private partnerships in 2017, to expand participation and spread the word that development with conservation is possible.

Council members were encouraged by Steve Polasky, professor of Environmental Economics at the University of Minnesota and TNC board member, who outlined “A Feasible Path to an Optimistic Future.” The TNC- sponsored study uses global databases to demonstrate that global water, food and infrastructure needs can be met for people, while still protecting the planet’s biodiversity. “Often at science meetings, the view is largely negative – that people are causing the destruction of nature and we have to learn to live small,” said Polasky. “When we started this analysis, I really wasn’t sure that, from a science perspective, there is a path forward – but I am pleased to report that there is. But it won’t happen without conscious change.” He congratulated the Council for its efforts to develop and promote the innovative models the world needs so both people and nature can thrive.

Joe Keenan, the Nature Conservancy’s executive vice president and lead on the LACC partnership, observed, “We can 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.”

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

- Expanding from 20 to 40 public-private **water funds** that channel investment into watershed protection for Latin America’s most at-risk cities with populations over 1 million, to cost-effectively enhance water security and urban climate resilience for 80 million people, while protecting 500,000 hectares.
- Strengthening **green growth compacts** that bring together farmers, ranchers, buyers, lenders, and government agencies around a Go/No Go approach to boosting yields on the existing food production footprint, while stopping expansion into iconic landscapes like the Amazon, the Maya Forest of the Yucatan, and the Llanos grasslands of Colombia; and

- Advocating for **early planning** at the landscape level, so Latin America can develop the transport, mining and energy infrastructure it needs while optimizing project siting to avoid priority conservation areas, adopting best practices to mitigate negative impacts, and directing compensation payments to offset effects on people and nature. Large mapping, technology, and policy initiatives are under way in Colombia, Mexico, Brazil and Argentina.

Council Members agreed that Latin America is positioned to be a global leader in water security, sustainable food and smart infrastructure. As part of the Council's work, Member representatives participate in thematic working groups with Conservancy staff throughout the year, advising on technical issues, networking to bring in additional partners, advocating for the uptake of models, and providing resources in cash and kind.

The Council and their Conservancy counterparts ended the meeting by recognizing 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 a unique 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.laconservationcouncil.org

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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