

Ending Deforestation & Alleviating Indigenous Poverty with REDD

A Project Concept from the Amazon Conservation Association

Project Overview

REDD, Reducing Emissions from Deforestation & Forest Degradation, is a powerful new mechanism for mitigating climate change by compensating tropical countries for their reductions of greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation. The Amazon Conservation Association (ACA) proposes a five-year demonstration project that presents a novel approach to REDD.

The heart of the proposed initiative is reforestation of degraded lands with green fire breaks enriched with economically valuable Andean plant species. The cultivation of these species will reduce deforestation pressure on the Amazonian cloud forest by providing an alternative income to local communities. The project also includes a strong scientific component, extending research already underway on fire frequency, forest degradation, and greenhouse gas emissions in the Andes. Most importantly, the project is designed as a scalable REDD mechanism ready to implement in other tropical montane regions, which incorporates strategies to strengthen REDD programs worldwide.



Human-caused fire in the tropical Andes is emitting large amounts of CO₂, degrading ecosystems, eliminating biodiversity, and threatening human livelihoods. Our proposal will reduce the frequency of fires at the same time it alleviates poverty and conserves healthy watersheds.



Why It Matters

- Improve knowledge and accounting practices for terrestrial greenhouse gas emissions
- Lower transaction costs for mid-size REDD projects
- Collaborate with indigenous communities to introduce culturally and economically appropriate REDD projects
- Integrate REDD into a diversified income portfolio for rural livelihood
- Improve assessment for the standard of "additionality," the principle that a project can only earn credits if the greenhouse gas emission reductions produced by the project are additional to reductions that would occur in the absence of the project.

The project site, the eastern slope of the tropical Andes in Cusco, Peru, is home to world-record biodiversity and cultural richness, but also extreme poverty. This area has potential for sustaining large amounts of carbon and biodiversity under climate change; however human activities, such as pasture clearing with fire, have lowered the natural tree line and reduced the area of cloud forest. If this burning is not mitigated, it will result in extinctions and deterioration of the ecosystem services upon which local communities depend.

This project will create opportunities for REDD enterprise development, including sustainable agriculture and ecotourism, which change financial incentives for landowners to encourage conservation. In addition to reducing carbon emissions, REDD programs in the tropical Andes offer an opportunity for alleviating poverty, opening the door for indigenous participation, creating training and employment prospects for women, and testing strategies to improve environmental and human conditions elsewhere in the tropics.



Implementation

Implementation in the first year will focus on fire control activities, agroforestry and crop production. We propose to create 20 kilometers of "green" fire breaks, specially designed crop and agroforestry systems of economically valuable Andean species, planted by local foresters and the half-dozen local and indigenous communities where we currently work. Such fire breaks will prevent the spread of fire into Manu National Park and adjacent community-held forests, protecting tens of thousands of hectares of forest and reducing CO₂ emissions. Implementation in years 2-5 will involve reforestation, social forestry on communal lands and REDD enterprise development that will generate employment and profits. Enterprises will include value-added non-timber forest products such as natural dyes, tropical fruit jams, and essential oils; high-quality wood products; and cultural and ecotourism programs in the cloud forest and at our Wayqecha Cloud Forest Research Center. Implementation will be supported with comprehensive training for native and other local communities.



Project Implementation Capacity

ACA, along with our Peruvian sister organization (ACCA), protects more than half a million hectares of Amazonian rainforest, operates the two largest research stations in Peru, and helps local communities to sustainably manage their natural resources. We have a major field presence in the Peruvian departments of Cusco and Madre de Dios, a successful micro-enterprise program in the cloud forest, and close ties to PhD scientists conducting research on an array of issues from biodiversity to climate change. ACA has also developed partnerships with regional governments and local civil society groups to promote conservation and mitigation projects.

Project Status

ACA is currently seeking funders and individual donors who would like to support this initiative. Program implementation began in July of 2009.