

Acre Amazonian Rainforest Conservation Portfolio: Acre, Rucas and Jurua Projects



90% of Brazil's Acre state is forested, but current rates of destruction mean by 2030 this could decline to 65%. This collection of three projects aims to prevent deforestation across 105,000 hectares of pristine rainforest in the Amazon basin, protecting some of the world's most biodiverse habitats. With the support of carbon finance, the projects work with communities and local groups to help protect ecosystem services while providing alternative models of economic development which avoid destruction of the forest. All three projects have achieved Gold Level status under the Climate Community and Biodiversity (CCB) Standard: Acre for its conservation efforts in an area of global significance, and Rucas and Jurua for exceptional community benefits.

Project type: Conservation-based forest management

Region: Latin America



Standards:



Forest ecosystems: Dependent on well-functioning aquatic environments, deforestation has harmful impacts on the Purus River such as eroding riverbeds and increased pollution.



The project aims to prevent deforestation and protect some of the world's most biodiverse habitats

The projects

Acre is Brazil's western most state, and the three projects in this portfolio are situated along important watercourses within the area which are also major tributaries of the Amazon. Tropical forests are the most carbon-rich and biodiverse habitats on Earth, home to 70% of the Earth's species of plants and animals. Acre State's remaining tropical rainforests not only provide climatic benefits such as sequestering carbon dioxide, but also provide a range of critically important ecosystem services.

The overarching objective of these projects is to build sustainable economic livelihoods for the local residents while preventing deforestation across 105,000 hectares of rainforest, primarily caused by conversion for cattle pasture and farming. The projects, which are based on privately-owned land, are working with NGOs to engage communities on granting land tenure and developing alternatives to deforestation to deliver emission reductions and preserve crucial ecosystems.

Scarlet Macaws are one of several vulnerable and endangered species in Acre.

Contribution to sustainable development

The projects contribute to sustainable development in several key areas:



Night vision image taken from a hidden wildlife camera trap.

Biodiversity protection

Through educating local communities about improved agricultural techniques while monitoring unsustainable uses of the forest, the projects are mitigating deforestation and helping to protect the area's rich biodiversity. The project areas are part of a key habitat for several endangered and vulnerable species, while the proximity to other large intact forest areas increases overall habitat connectivity. The International Union of Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has identified a variety of plant and animal species in Acre that are either vulnerable or endangered, including the Woolly Monkey and Black-faced Monkey (both endangered), Goeldi's Monkey (vulnerable), and 16 species of flora that are endangered or vulnerable but are currently protected through this project. Within the Acre project area specifically, Scarlet Macaw, Amazon River Dolphins, Squirrel Monkeys, and Great White Herons have also been observed. As part of a rapid biodiversity assessment, several endangered flora species were identified in the area - more extensive biodiversity research is ongoing with the help of local and international academic institutions.

Food security

The projects are educating communities on agricultural techniques to help produce a sustainable food supply. Families have been trained and will continue to have access to courses on how to grow bananas, chickpeas, cassava and corn; artisanal processing of fish; rearing organic pigs; and using rotational cattle pastures. The goal is to increase yields and help make these agricultural activities more profitable. According to project surveys, almost every household sells crops or cattle beyond the project areas.

Education & skills

The projects have hosted agricultural courses to support diversification of agricultural production and household income, while raising awareness of the benefits of avoided deforestation. To raise awareness of the importance of conservation in schools, lessons are being incorporated into educational programmes. Additionally, in the Acre project, the project land owners have helped improve school access by supplying a school boat.





Improved agricultural techniques and diversified production helps to increase yields, providing a sustainable food supply while generating a surplus which can be sold to outside markets.

Financial security

Income sources are diversifying through improved agricultural practices which allow cash crops to be grown and sold. Strengthening business capacity through training, and plans to provide a boat for exporting goods will further help communities lower their transaction costs and increase market access for their crops.

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Water stewardship

Located on the Purus, Jurua and Valparaíso Rivers, important tributaries of the Amazon, the projects incorporate important inland water ecosystems that provide benefits such as pollution and nutrient absorption and recycling, flood management, drinking water supply, and mitigation against the impacts of climate change.

The Acre project is helping to rehabilitate degraded areas along the riverbank through reforestation activities, helping to combat riverbed erosion and polluting sediment levels in the water, while enhancing overall protection of watersheds through decreased deforestation.

Job creation

The projects have recruited workers from the local area to assist with the forest carbon inventory, regional deforestation and land-use modelling. Jobs are also created through the installation and monitoring of wildlife via wildlife camera traps and local project management, assisting delivery of project goals.

Infrastructure development (Acre project only)

A key element of the Acre project involves land owners working with families to give them formal rights to individual parcels of land in return for assistance in preventing deforestation – a significant impact for a group of families who previously had no official rights to the land. The process of titling land to communities is very complex and has been successfully granted to some families within the Acre project. The process will continue, granting more families in the Acre project, and families in the Rucas and Jurua projects land rights in the future.

Health and well-being (Acre project only)

Communities living within the Acre project area have historically lacked access to adequate health services as a result of the remote location. To improve community livelihoods, the project is facilitating doctor visits from local towns on a periodic basis, known as the Itinerant Health Programme. The first Itinerant Health Programme took place in December 2014, attended by approximately 180 local community members from within and outside the project area. The programme provided basic check-ups and more specific care from a gynecologist and a pediatrician.

Planned project activities (Across the three projects)

The projects plan to build local health centres and dental clinics, providing consistent local community access to improved medical facilities and services. The clinics will hire and

The projects plan to build local health centres and dental clinic to improve community livelihoods.





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train a local community member to provide basic first aid, with monthly visits from a dentist and a doctor. A small pharmacy will also be provided for basic medicine distribution.

Additionally, the projects aim to proportion a share of the carbon revenue to local communities directly to improve household income.

Agricultural courses support diversification of agricultural production and household income, while raising awareness of the benefits of avoided deforestation

Planned activities (Acre project)

Many families in the project area are without electricity and can seldom afford diesel which powers small-scale generators. The project intends to increase the electrification of communities over the next five to 10 years, which will include development of a sustainable woodlot to increase the share of sustainable energy resources in the area.

Additionally, the project aims to improve the quality of education for local youth through school infrastructure developments, such as building new classrooms to offer separate learning spaces for different grades.

Planned activities (Rucas and Jurua projects)

A local processing plant is anticipated to be built to commercialise açai berry cultivation

within the Rucas and Jurua projects.

This will involve the purchase of açai berries from local communities and transportation to the local processing plant. Here, the berries will be processed into açai juice, and then transported to Cruzeiro do Sul for final sale to end consumers.

The NGO project partner is planning to set up an association to support households that farm and process cassava into flour. The aim of this association would be to provide financial support in the event of a mechanical failure during processing. Further support could be offered in the form of developing mechanical harvesting techniques, and by increasing market access.

The region

Brazil has the largest tropical forest area in the world, making up 61% of its total land area in 2010¹. This accounts for about one third of the world's remaining rainforests, including a majority of the Amazon rainforest². Brazil is a priority for REDD+ projects to address continued pressures from cattle ranching, agriculture and logging, which led to almost one million hectares and 63 million tonnes of carbon being lost each year between 2010 and 2015³.

The State of Acre has the third smallest economy of Brazil's 27 states, and roughly 40% of the population lives below the poverty line. Per capita income is the 8th lowest in the country, though GDP has grown substantially in recent years. Nearly 90% of the land in Acre is forested, but at current trends of deforestation this is estimated to decline to roughly 65% by 2030.

Location

The projects are located along the Purus River, Jurua River and Valparaiso River, and are in one of the world's most biologically diverse regions.

Acre – 35,000 hectares
Rucas – 42,000 hectares
Jurua – 28,000 hectares

1. World Resources Institute Brasil (2015) Forests, Available from <http://www.wribrasil.org.br/en/our-work/topics/forests>, Accessed 7/9/2015

2. Butler (2014) Mongabay – Brazil, Available from <http://rainforests.mongabay.com/20brazil.htm>, Accessed 7/9/2015

3. FAO (2015) Global Forest Resources Assessment 2015, Available from <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4793e.pdf>, Accessed 15/9/2015

Contact us:

London: 167 Fleet Street, 3rd Floor,
London, EC4A 2EA United Kingdom
T +44 (0)20 7833 6000
sales@naturalcapitalpartners.com

New York: 545 Madison Avenue,
14th Floor, New York, NY 10022
T +1-212-390-8835
salesna@naturalcapitalpartners.com