

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



News Release

November 4, 2009

Latin American and Caribbean Conservationists Gather To Formulate Innovative New Training Program

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This week in Montelimar, Nicaragua, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Fauna & Flora International are jointly conducting a precedent-setting workshop aimed at developing a cadre of conservation professionals in Latin America. More than fifty top conservation practitioners from over thirty countries in Latin America and the Caribbean will be meeting to formulate a state-of-the-art, multidisciplinary program to train the next generation of conservationists in the region.

“By bringing together the region's most highly effective conservation practitioners we will begin to develop a new, innovative training program to produce future conservation leaders with the experience and skills necessary to address the complex conservation challenges facing Latin American species, many of which spend part of their lives in the United States,” said Sam Hamilton, Service Director.

An estimated 40 percent of the world's biological diversity can be found in Latin America and the Caribbean, making it one of the most environmentally significant regions on the planet. But compared to the richness and complexity of its natural resources, the number of natural resource professionals in the area is disproportionately small. This is due, at least in part, to a lack of available conservation training opportunities. In contrast, the United States, for example, contains approximately 10 percent of the world's biological diversity, yet the U.S. is estimated to have twice the number of higher education conservation programs as Latin America.

“Fauna & Flora International is proud of its close partnership with the Service in support of effective international conservation. With the high-caliber team assembling in Nicaragua, we look forward to putting in motion with the

Service an innovative approach to developing the next generation of conservation leadership – based solidly on the experience and expertise of the region’s top conservation practitioners,” commented Katie Frohardt, FFI Executive Director.

The Service’s *Wildlife Without Borders* regional program for Latin America and the Caribbean (WWB-LAC) is working to address this critical need by supporting in-country efforts to build capacity for professional management of wildlife and other natural resources. For more than 20 years, the program has supported training throughout the region with a focus on protected area managers, park guards, community leaders, and graduate students. With the convening of this week’s workshop entitled *Preparing Highly Effective Conservation Professionals for the Future*, the program has begun to sharpen its focus on cultivating future environmental leaders.

Renee Castellón from Nicaragua’s Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources (MARENA, as it is known by its Spanish acronym), is scheduled to join participants today for a discussion on conservation challenges facing the region. Christopher Nyce, from the Office of Environment and Science at the U.S. Embassy in Managua, will accompany Mr. Castellón .

For more information about the Service’s international grants programs, visit http://www.fws.gov/international/DIC/dic_home.html.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit **www.fws.gov**.

Fauna & Flora International was founded in 1903 as the world’s first international conservation organization. The pioneering work of its founders in Africa led to the creation of numerous protected areas, including Kruger and Serengeti National Parks. Expanding beyond its African origins, Fauna & Flora International works to give conservation a voice on the international stage, drawing worldwide attention to the plight of rare and endangered species. For more information about Fauna & Flora International, visit <http://www.fauna-flora.org>

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