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COLOMBIA FORESTS AND WETLANDS ACTIVITY

Supporting forest and natural resource management to conserve biodiversity and reduce carbon emissions.

OVERVIEW

The Colombia Forests and Wetlands Activity helps transfer forest and natural resources management expertise from the United States Forest Service (USFS) to local government and community actors. The activity also provides technical assistance to local actors in the areas of public forest governance, wildfire management and carbon monitoring. Through these efforts, the activity is advancing biodiversity conservation, improving natural resource governance, and reducing carbon emissions caused by deforestation and wetland degradation. This activity runs from June 2020-June 2023.

Colombia is the second most biodiverse country on earth, and over 50 percent of its territory is covered by natural forests. These forests provide key ecosystem services like carbon storage, soil formation, and water purification. However, land appropriation, agricultural expansion and illicit activities like illegal mining are driving land use changes in Colombia's forests and wetlands. In turn, the loss of these ecosystems is increasing carbon emissions and threatening the health and stability of Colombia's natural resources and communities.

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COMPONENTS

STRENGTHENING FOREST AND NATURAL RESOURCES GOVERNANCE

The Colombia Forests and Wetlands Activity works with local communities and the Government of Colombia (GOC) to identify and address the main drivers of deforestation and biodiversity loss. It does this by providing these actors with technical assistance needed to perform environmental assessments and to understand institutional and legal frameworks. The activity also trains Colombian youth on environmental conservation, leadership and volunteerism.

IMPROVING FOREST FIRE MANAGEMENT

The Colombia Forests and Wetlands Activity trains GOC officials in the skills and knowledge needed to prevent, suppress and respond to forest fires. Within this training, the activity prioritizes supporting women's leadership and skill-building opportunities.

CONSTRUCTING FOREST AND WETLAND MAPS

The Colombia Forests and Wetlands Activity builds Colombian academic and government actors' capacities to perform forest and wetland mapping. This mapping is needed to develop a national forest inventory, map forest cover changes, and identify the best models and technologies for agriculture, forestry and greenhouse gas capture projects.

EXPECTED RESULTS

- Improve GOC officials' capacity to govern public forests and protected areas;
- Strengthen GOC agencies and Colombian universities' wildfire management capacities;
- Train Colombian youth living in targeted rural areas in natural resources conservation and sustainable livelihoods;
- Unify existing Colombian forest fire forecast systems with the goal of establishing an integrated, interagency system unique to forest fires;
- Advance the scientific methods used by Colombian institutions to understand wildfires' impact on land cover change; and
- Help GOC agencies and academic institutions develop national maps of the country's forests and wetlands, and their respective changes overtime.