



Rainforest Foundation US

FALL NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER
2024

Dear Friends,

As fires rage across the Amazon at an unprecedented scale, we are reminded of both the fragility of this vital ecosystem and the critical role Indigenous people play in protecting the rainforest. The devastating impact of these fires extends beyond Brazil's borders, reaching into Peru, Bolivia, and beyond. In the face of this crisis, our work has never been more urgent.

The situation is dire, but there is hope because healthy rainforests don't burn. Rainforests cared for by Indigenous peoples are healthier, experience less deforestation, and have fewer fires and lower fire temperatures, meaning they're better able to resist forest loss.

At Rainforest Foundation US, we continue to stand alongside Indigenous communities—the most

effective defenders of the Amazon. By advancing land rights, supporting our partners, and equipping Indigenous monitors with technology, we are helping safeguard over 19.5 million acres of forest from further destruction. But we know this fight is far from over. As we scale up our efforts, the collaboration between governments, local communities, and organizations like ours will be key to ensuring Amazon's future.

This newsletter also highlights some of our other inspiring work with Indigenous partners in Central and South America. We are proud of the impact we're making with our partners. Together, we are protecting rainforests and the future they hold for all of us.

With deep gratitude,



Suzanne Pelletier
Executive Director
Rainforest Foundation US

Indigenous communities are on the frontlines of the fires raging in the Amazon and are the best line of defense to prevent them. Your donation will help us respond quickly to some of our partners' immediate needs while building toward a more sustainable future. [Click here to learn more.](#)



Credit: Marizilda Cruppe, Greenpeace

HEALTHY RAINFORESTS DON'T BURN: RFUS'S ROLE IN PREVENTING ESCALATING AMAZON FIRES

This year has been the worst year for fires across the Amazon since 2005. In Brazil alone, fire activity more than doubled compared to 2023, surged by 104% with over 65,000 fire hotspots recorded by the end of August. The fires—exacerbated by droughts, the effects of El Niño, and climate change—have spread to other parts of the Amazon, including Bolivia, Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, and Guyana. These fires and droughts are devastating Indigenous communities and wildlife, and the situation underscores the urgent need for immediate action to protect one of the world's most critical ecosystems.

“This year we have seen the Amazon dry up to an extent we've never seen before as a result of deforestation. We don't know what will happen to

us next year. I imagine that it is going to be harder and that is why we need to prevent the impacts of climate change,” said Apu Francisco Hernández Cayetano, President of the Federation of Ticuna and Yahuas Communities of Bajo Amazonas (FECOTYBA).

Rainforest Foundation US (RFUS) is at the forefront of efforts to prevent fires by supporting those best equipped to protect them and keep them standing—Indigenous peoples. Through legal defense, mapping, land titling, and monitoring programs, RFUS equips Indigenous communities with the resources they need to protect their territories. By advancing land rights to over 6.6 million acres in the Amazon and expanding monitoring programs to

over 19.5 million acres, RFUS ensures that Indigenous peoples can effectively manage their lands and reduce fire threats.

Cameron Ellis, RFUS Field Science Director, explains, “With the Amazon in an extended drought and quickly approaching a tipping point, the scale of these fires presents a very new type of threat to the region.” By securing Indigenous peoples' land rights and providing vital tools and training, RFUS helps protect the Amazon from fires, mining, illegal logging, and other destructive activities. Coordinated action between governments, institutions, and local communities is now more critical than ever to mitigating further damage and preserving this vital ecosystem for future generations.

RFUS IN THE NEWS: *MONGABAY, BBC, AND THE INDEPENDENT*

Our Program Director Christine Halvorson was interviewed by *BBC News* in London and *The Independent* to shed light on the ongoing fires and drought in the region.

“The rivers are at the lowest level in decades, if not forever. It's the worst fire season in the past 19 years, the worst drought in 40 years – and perhaps the worst ever,” Halvorson explained.

In an opinion article co-signed by Wendy Piñeda, General Project Manager of RFUS in Peru, and Miguel Guimaraes Vasquez, Vice President of AIDSESP, *Mongabay* highlighted the successful process of securing 37 Indigenous land titles in Peru in just eleven months. This collaborative, community-led approach demonstrates a scalable model for expediting land titling and securing rights, thereby contributing to protecting Indigenous territories and the fight against deforestation.



Credit: Rainforest Foundation US

RFUS AND AMPB CONCLUDE \$2M PROJECT SUPPORTING WOMEN LEADERS AND DIRECT COMMUNITY FINANCING IN CENTRAL AMERICA

After three impactful years, RFUS is concluding the B'atz Regional Institutional Strengthening Project, a partnership between RFUS and the Mesoamerican Alliance of Peoples and Forests (AMPB). The \$2 million US government-funded initiative helped strengthen Indigenous and local community organizations across Mexico and Central America and distributed much needed funds to grassroots projects and organizations in the region.

The partnership led to the consolidation of the Mesoamerican Territorial Fund, an Indigenous managed financial mechanism that distributes funds to support local governance and sustainable economic growth for Indigenous and local community organizations in Central America and Mexico. Since its launch last year, the fund has already begun supporting many women-led projects and leading capacity strengthening initiatives for small, local organizations. As its director Maria Pia Hernández noted,

RFUS helped turn the idea of the fund into a reality. “There’s now a management team, dedicated personnel, an operations manual, and a monitoring and evaluation platform. It’s the transition from an idea to a fully structured fund.”

This fund sets a new standard for how direct financing can enhance autonomy and long-term sustainability for Indigenous and local communities.

TEHCAMPS: STRENGTHENING INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP IN WILDLIFE PROTECTION AND TERRITORIAL DEFENSE

RFUS recently hosted two impactful TechCamps in the Peruvian Amazon—vibrant incubators for Indigenous-led climate solutions, dialogue, and collective learning. Organized in partnership with the Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest (AIDESEP) and the US Embassy, these events empowered local communities to take action. The first TechCamp, held in Iquitos in July, gathered 55 participants—including scientific experts, civil society representatives, and Indigenous organizations—to develop concrete strategies for safeguarding wildlife and biodiversity across the Amazon Basin. Key activities included mapping critical wildlife areas and devising strategies to combat illegal wildlife trafficking.

These efforts also strengthened alliances focused on implementing long-term, collaborative solutions for protecting Amazonian biodiversity. In early September, RFUS co-hosted a second TechCamp in Pucallpa, where 50 Indigenous women leaders from Peru and Ecuador gathered to share strategies for defending their territories against illegal activities such as logging and mining. The event focused on strengthening their collective voice, addressing gender-based violence, and building resilience in their communities. “This event provided a platform for Indigenous women to exchange knowledge, build strategic alliances, and strengthen their role as defenders of their territories. By working together,



Credit: Gabriela Delgado, Rainforest Foundation US

these women are not only protecting their territories but also ensuring a future of dignity and resilience for the next generations,” said Kathya Castillo, Gender & Inclusion Specialist at RFUS Peru.



IN THE
SPOTLIGHT

RFUS WORK FEATURED IN THE “FIRST FLIGHTS” SERIES

Cameron Ellis, RFUS Science Director, and Laura Piccoli, RFUS Program Manager, spent five days in Guyana with the crew of “**First Flights, with Kate Broug**,” a new YouTube series documenting how Indigenous communities are using drones to monitor and protect the Amazon Rainforest. The vast and difficult-to-access terrain of the region makes modern drone technology a crucial tool in preserving these ancient lands, offering an innovative solution to the challenges of rainforest conservation. Stay tuned for more!

FOR NEARLY 35
YEARS, RAINFOREST
FOUNDATION US HAS
WORKED TO ADDRESS
CLIMATE CHANGE
AND SAFEGUARD
BIODIVERSITY BY
PROMOTING THE RIGHTS
OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES
AND PROTECTING
RAINFORESTS FROM
FURTHER DESTRUCTION



SUPPORTING
OUR WORK

1 FOR THE RAINFOREST

Research shows that Indigenous communities are best at protecting their forests, but unfortunately, **less than 1%** of international climate funding goes directly to Indigenous communities.

You can help correct this imbalance by joining 1 for the Rainforest—by pledging at least 1% of your annual income to Indigenous-led rainforest protection.

Will you directly support the rainforests' best protectors? Sign our 1 for the Rainforest pledge today at rainforestfoundation.org/pledge.

OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT OUR WORK

Learn more at www.rainforestfoundation.org/give,
and if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to
giving@rainforestus.org.

We'd love to hear from you!



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