



SPRING NEWSLETTER

APRIL
2025

Dear Friends,

With **Earth Day** approaching, we reflect on the incredible resilience of our planet and the people fighting to protect it. This resilience is needed now, more than ever.

Indigenous peoples have fought to protect their lands for generations, and their struggle persists as threats from deforestation, extractive industries, and other illegal activities continue to grow. Recent US government **funding cuts** exacerbate these threats, placing Indigenous peoples' territories and rainforests—our planet's most vital ecosystems—at even greater risk.

With your support, we remain steadfast in our mission this Earth Day and every day: **defending Indigenous peoples' rights and protecting their rainforests that sustain our planet.**

We are doubling down on our efforts: providing direct funding to Indigenous communities to protect their forests, supporting legal protections for their ancestral lands, and amplifying Indigenous voices on the global stage. Recently, we collaborated with the South Rupununi District Council in Guyana, New York University, Forest Peoples Programme, and Harvard University, bringing additional expertise and resources to address complex issues impacting the region from illegal gold mining.

This **Earth Day**, we invite you to stand with us. Your support—whether through a donation or spreading awareness—fuels the frontline efforts that make real change possible. Rainforests are essential to the survival of our planet.

Together, we will keep them standing.

Thank you for your unwavering support.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Suzanne Pelletier'.



Suzanne Pelletier
Executive Director
Rainforest Foundation US

Image Credit: Vicki Brown / Forest Peoples Programme

THE TRUE COST OF GOLD: MINING, MALARIA, AND THE FIGHT FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' LANDS IN GUYANA

Illegal and unregulated gold mining in Guyana's South Rupununi region is driving environmental destruction and a surge in malaria cases, threatening biodiversity and the health of Indigenous communities. To address these

intersecting crises, Rainforest Foundation US (RFUS) is partnering with the South Rupununi District Council (SRDC), New York University Global Justice Clinic, Forest Peoples Programme, and Harvard University to strengthen

community-led monitoring and advocacy for land rights.

[Read more.](#)

RFUS'S LAND RIGHTS AND FOREST MONITORING WORK HELPED COMMUNITIES ABSORB 9.8 MILLION METRIC TONS OF CO2 IN 2024

Indigenous land stewardship is a powerful climate solution. A 2023 report confirms that Indigenous-managed lands in the Amazon act as major carbon sinks, removing far more CO2 than they emit—unlike public and private lands, which often contribute to emissions. From 2001 to 2021, titled

Indigenous territories removed a net 340 million metric tons of CO2 annually—equivalent to the United Kingdom's total yearly fossil fuel emissions. Research also shows that much of the legally recognized Indigenous lands experience 66% less deforestation, reinforcing their role in climate stability.

RFUS's land rights work in Peru, Brazil, Guyana, and Panama helped sustain a net annual carbon sink of 9.8 million metric tons of CO2e, highlighting the importance and urgency of securing Indigenous land rights for the planet's future.

[Read more.](#)

RFUS IMPACT 2024

Panama

1.6M acres monitored
300k acres land rights advanced
1.1M metric tons of CO2e stored (net)

Peru

200 forest monitors
2M acres monitored
80k acres of titles received
1M metric tons of CO2e stored (net)

Guyana

12.2M acres monitored
26 forest monitors
3.5M acres land rights advanced
5.5M metric tons of CO2e stored (net)

Brazil

4M acres monitored
20 forest monitors
2.1M metric tons of CO2e stored (net)

AN INTERVIEW WITH CHRIS JARRETT, PH.D., MONITORING, EVALUATION, RESEARCH, & LEARNING MANAGER



Chris's doctoral research in the Ecuadorian Amazon and work at the Field Museum in Chicago—where he spearheaded collaborative research and conservation initiatives across the Amazon basin—are enhancing our strategic efforts to document, track, and optimize the impact of our partnerships and projects.

1) What motivates your work?

We're facing myriad, intersecting crises—intensifying and compounding impacts from climate change, unprecedented levels of environmental destruction, and a slow transition away from fossil fuels. I see the movement to put Indigenous peoples and local communities at the center of environmental governance as essential and urgent, and I am excited to play a role in advancing that vision. Also, I feel a deep connection and commitment to the peoples of the Amazon after living there for several years. At the same time, I believe we must be strategic and rigorous in how we advance this agenda, and I am committed to an evidence-based approach. I have a Ph.D. in Anthropology and am eager to contribute to a more robust analysis of what's working, what's not, and how we can maximize the effectiveness of our efforts.

2) What's your specific role? And why did RFUS decide to hire a monitoring and evaluation specialist at this time?

In order for our team to better assess our programs' effectiveness, I'll be enhancing RFUS's systems for documenting, tracking,

and learning to maximize the impact of our activities with our partners. To that end, I'm helping to define our key indicators of success and setting up effective data collection processes to support informed decision making. Another important aspect of my role involves meeting with our Indigenous partners in the field and supporting them to develop and strengthen their own monitoring and learning systems.

3) How do you see this new role enhancing RFUS's work?

My focus is on developing clearer, more robust measures of our programs and learning what is working and what is not. I believe that having someone directly focused on evaluating our impact and helping integrate what we learn into our programs has the potential to strengthen RFUS as an organization significantly. My background as a cultural anthropologist and familiarity with RFUS's operational regions will help guide these efforts.

4) How will you evaluate RFUS's work and impact?

I am eager to ensure that we are adopting a strengths- or assets-based approach to

everything we do with our partners, and to build a culture of reflection and learning. The dominant approaches to working with Indigenous and local communities tend to focus first on what people lack and how they're falling short of (typically Western) standards of wellbeing and success. I think it's essential to build on what people are already doing well. To that end, our programs team now reflects each month on what's working well, what's not, and how we can adapt to changing circumstances. We conduct project evaluations, and we have regular check-ins and exchanges with partners and peer organizations to learn from and share methodologies and frameworks.

SUPPORTING
OUR WORK

Did you know that Indigenous communities—the best protectors of vital, carbon-storing rainforests—get **less than 1% of global climate funding?**

That's not enough. At Rainforest Foundation US, we are working to ensure that Indigenous peoples get the support and funding needed to protect their forests that we all rely on.

You can help us move the needle by **signing the 1 for the Rainforest pledge**, a commitment to give 1% of your income this year to Indigenous-led rainforest protection. By signing, you set a powerful example for

climate-concerned citizens and institutions, and help spread the word: In order for rainforests to flourish again, **Indigenous communities need substantive support.**

Until April 30, a generous donor is matching all gifts to Rainforest Foundation US up to \$40,000.

If you're planning to pledge, you can make your gift today to double your impact.

Pledge 1 for the Rainforest today:
rainforestfoundation.org/1-for-the-Rainforest

FOR MORE THAN 35
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AND PROTECTING
RAINFORESTS FROM
FURTHER DESTRUCTION

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