

Protecting Rainforests, Protecting Our Future

2025–2030 Strategic Plan

The next five years will decide the future of Earth's tropical forests—and our climate.

By 2030, the world must act decisively to stop the destruction of some of Earth's greatest carbon sinks: tropical rainforests. The survival of these extraordinary ecosystems, the most biodiverse places on our planet, depends on securing the rights and leadership of the Indigenous peoples who have protected them for millennia.

Rainforest Foundation US (RFUS) envisions a world where the rights of Indigenous peoples are respected and rainforests flourish. Our 2025–2030 Strategic Plan is a blueprint for achieving that vision: scaling Indigenous-led forest protection across Central and South America so that people and forests can thrive together in a habitable climate.

What's at Stake. A closing window for the planet.

We are running out of time. The world has already lost one-third of its historical rainforests, and another third is severely degraded. The Amazon and Mesoamerica are home to over half of the planet's remaining rainforests. Yet, vast parts of these massive forests are now approaching irreversible tipping points.

Scientists warn that if just 3 to 8 percent more of the Amazon is destroyed, as much as 60 percent could collapse into savannah. The consequences would echo across the globe: massive carbon releases, disrupted rainfall patterns, food scarcity, mass species extinction, and escalating humanitarian crises.

Yet amid this urgency lies hope. Indigenous peoples and local communities manage more than 35 percent of Latin America's forests and 45 percent of the remaining intact Amazon landscapes. Where their rights are recognized, deforestation can drop by up to 80 percent.

Protecting forests means supporting the people whose knowledge and leadership keep them standing. It is one of the most powerful and cost-effective solutions to the climate and biodiversity crises the world has ever known.

Our Goals for 2025–2030. Scaling Indigenous-led impact.

Over the next five years, RFUS will strengthen and expand partnerships with Indigenous peoples and local communities across Central and South America to deliver measurable, lasting impact.

We will work with partners in Brazil, Peru, Guyana, Ecuador, Panama, and Mesoamerica to advance land rights over 14 million acres, expand effective territorial control across 91 million acres, strengthen 67 Indigenous and local organizations, and increase their access to funding needed to protect their forests and rights.

Our strategy centers on three interlocking priorities:

1) Land Rights: Securing the foundation of forest protection

Goal by 2030: Advance and defend land rights across nearly 14 million acres.

When Indigenous communities have legal control over their ancestral lands, they can protect forests for generations. RFUS supports that process every step of the way. We train communities to map and document their territories, provide legal support, and help partners advocate for policy reforms that accelerate recognition and uphold their rights.

Over the next five years, we will:

- provide legal and advocacy support for new and expanded land claims and the defense of rights;
- offer mapping and technical training using participatory and digital tools;
- build evidence-based policy research linking land rights to effective climate action, health, and biodiversity protection; and
- strengthen coalitions and networks connecting Indigenous leaders, donors, and governments to transform land tenure systems.

Land is the root of Indigenous identity, sovereignty, and survival. When land rights are secured, communities thrive: protecting forests, sustaining livelihoods, and keeping cultures alive.

2) Territorial Protection: Defending forests through community-led monitoring and governance

Goal by 2030: Support community-led monitoring over 91 million acres and effective management of 43 million acres.

Owning land is not enough; protecting it requires strong governance, tools, and sustained support. RFUS helps Indigenous organizations develop management plans and sophisticated systems for territorial monitoring, combining traditional knowledge with cutting-edge technology.

Our partners use drones, satellite imagery, and a groundbreaking community monitoring system, [Rainforest Alert](#). In Peru, this integrated system has proven to reduce deforestation by 52 percent in just one year.

Over the next five years, we will:

- train and equip local forest monitors and data analysts;
- expand networks of Indigenous-run satellite information centers and data hubs;
- support the creation of land-use and life-plans that reflect community aspirations and Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC);
- facilitate collaboration with state agencies and allies to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of community-led forest protection and integrate Indigenous monitoring into national climate policies; and
- provide legal protection and advocacy for environmental defenders under threat.

By scaling these proven models, we will protect millions of acres of forest vital to the world's climate stability. At the same time we will strengthen the capacity of Indigenous communities to prevent illegal logging, mining, and encroachment on their territories for the long term.

3) Institutional Strengthening: Building resilient Indigenous organizations and increasing direct access to funding

Goal by 2030: Strengthen 67 Indigenous and local community organizations.

Strong institutions are essential for Indigenous self-determination. RFUS invests directly in organizational capacity—governance, financial management, project design, and leadership development—so that Indigenous organizations can flourish. When Indigenous organizations are strong, they can confront new challenges, defend their lands, secure and manage more resources, and shape their own future on their own terms.

Our approach combines providing much-needed core funding, hands-on training, mentoring, and peer-to-peer exchanges. We help partners access and administer significant finance directly, often serving as a fiscal sponsor or technical ally while supporting them to build their own systems.

A key focus is supporting Indigenous-led territorial funds. These are financial mechanisms created by regional Indigenous organizations or alliances that aim to

secure national or international funding and direct those funds to local projects or organizations where they are needed most. These Indigenous-led funds are paving the way for large-scale, locally governed finance to reach the frontlines of forest protection.

RFUS will also continue advocating globally for more equitable, better-tailored funding mechanisms that channel climate and development finance directly to Indigenous peoples and local communities.

Our Path Forward. Partner-led, data-driven, and grounded in trust.

RFUS's work is driven by deep, long-term partnerships built on respect, trust, and collaboration. Our guiding principles are simple but transformative: partner-led; shaped through co-creation and adaptability; anchored in mutual accountability; and sustained over the long term.

Our approach is also data-driven—combining Indigenous knowledge with cutting-edge tools to track progress, strengthen accountability, and guide decision-making. Through community monitoring, satellite imagery, and local data collection, our partners identify threats, measure impact, and demonstrate results in real time. This evidence not only informs our strategies but also proves what works: when Indigenous peoples have the rights, resources, and data they need, deforestation drops, biodiversity thrives, and climate resilience grows.

By uniting partnership, data, and trust, RFUS has become one of the most credible and effective intermediaries for channeling climate funding directly to Indigenous organizations.

Why Our Approach Works. Built on rights, sustained by results.

For decades, RFUS has demonstrated that defending rights is the most effective way to protect rainforests.

Our rights-based model links human rights, land tenure, and climate action. Indigenous peoples and local communities have managed forests sustainably for generations. When their rights are respected and they have the tools and resources they need, deforestation declines, biodiversity thrives, and carbon remains locked in forests.

What Makes Us Different

Rainforest Foundation US was one of the first organizations to recognize the critical role of Indigenous peoples in forest protection. We don't manage forests for Indigenous peoples—we support them with the tools and resources they need to manage their own.

We combine the reach of an international NGO with the humility and focus of an ally organization. Our expertise lies in connecting resources, technology, and policy influence to the grassroots level, ensuring that communities are the architects of their own future.

We are flexible and responsive, able to mobilize quickly in crisis or opportunity. Our core values—Justice, Respect, Integrity, Learning, and Connection—guide everything we do.

Countdown to 2030. A race to protect forests and our climate.

Scientists warn that by 2030 the damage to some of our planet's last remaining ecosystems could be irreversible. The next five years will determine whether the Amazon and other tropical forests remain living systems or cross the point of no return.

The next five years are also a period of extraordinary possibility. Some governments have pledged to halt deforestation, donors have committed new funding, and frameworks for biodiversity and climate action are in motion. But these promises will only lead to progress if the resources reach the Indigenous peoples who can deliver results.

Through our 2025–2030 Strategic Plan, RFUS is channeling this global momentum into concrete, community-led action that delivers results where they matter most.

Call to Action. Protecting forests, protecting our shared future.

The path forward is clear: forests will thrive when Indigenous peoples' rights are respected and upheld.

Together, we can ensure that the world's rainforests remain vibrant, life-giving ecosystems for generations to come. What we do now for rainforests and the people who protect them will shape the fate of our planet forever.

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