



## ECUADOR

# Water, biodiversity conservation and resistance to mining: a way of life in Intag

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2008 marked eight years of collaboration between Rainforest Concern and DECOIN in conserving Intag's bio diverse forest, its wildlife and the area's water resources. Much of the sustainable development carried out by DECOIN has been through direct implementation of conservation and alternative development projects for which we have much to thank Rainforest Concern and their donors.



The stunning cloudforests of Intag

### Community Watershed and Biodiversity Reserves.

The initial collaboration between DECOIN and Rainforest Concern started 11 years ago with DECOIN's Community Watershed and Biodiversity Reserve project. The main objective of the project was to conserve as much of the area's unique and threatened wildlife and biodiversity as possible. Today these reserves produce safe drinking water for thousands of Intag's residents, and help protect pockets of biological diversity. Because most people are aware of the link between safe water and health, the project has been a resounding success, with 36 communities owning, and actively taking care of their reserves. Even though the project protects a relatively small area (approximately 900 hectares), it is the motivation behind their protection that differentiates this project from most other conservation initiatives. An encouraging confirmation of this is that none of the

community-owned areas has experienced any illegal squatting or logging. Thanks to the projects success several other communities throughout the country have requested help to protect their micro watersheds and the Ministry of Environment has expressed interest in replicating the project in other parts of the country.

### Reforestation with Native Trees.

Another very important aspect of our work involves the planting of thousands of native trees in areas needing reforestation. Communities produce native trees as close to their reserves as possible, with projects paying the community a fair price for the plants. To date, approximately 30,000 trees have been planted in the five community reserves, and in collaboration with Rainforest Concern and other conservation organisations there are plans to plant an additional 80,000 trees. The reforestation plan includes the use of several threatened species and has created the most comprehensive database on native tree reforestation in the region.

### Alternative Development

With the help of Rainforest Concern we are working with six communities and five cottage-industry community groups to conserve Intag's unique diversity. One of the project's main objectives is to support the communities and groups most impacted by the mining companies whose disruptive presence has caused significant economic hardships on the people living in the area. The project also includes the promotion of agro forestry, an investigation into plant disease and the reduction of pesticide use, as well as improving marketing for the area's products.

### Mining: A Reason to Celebrate

Intag has become a reference to the rest of the country and other nations in how to resist destructive extractive industry development. In April 2007, the government decreed a complete halt to new mining development, and reverted thousands of mining concessions. Thanks to Rainforest Concern and The Planet Foundation Project public attention was drawn to the real threats posed by large-scale mining development through a series of highly suc-

cessful national and international mining forums. In August of 2008, with the support of Rainforest Concern & The Planet Foundation Project, the 18,009 hectare Junin-Toisan Municipal protected area was created. This is one of the very few Municipal protected areas in the country that not only protects primary forests and dozens of pristine rivers and streams, but also sits right over the copper deposit.

DECOIN is currently working with the national environmental umbrella organisation, CENDEMA, on a new mining law, which will be presented to the legislators for approval. Thanks to The Planet Foundation we were able to hire a top-notch lawyer to help analyse the proposed legislation. Though work lies ahead to try to minimise mining's destructive impact on water, forests, biodiversity and communities, you can bet DECOIN will be one of the main actors involved in this crucial work.



### Looking Ahead

DECOIN's Executive Director was recently given an award by the Denver Zoo for his conservation efforts making him the first international recipient of the Denver Zoological Foundation Conservation Award. The award highlights the effective conservation work carried out by DECOIN's on both a personal and organisational level. For the foreseeable future, we will continue implementing more of the conservation initiatives that got the attention of the Denver Zoo and brought us the award. We will continue our efforts to increase awareness of environmental issues amongst the residents of Intag by supporting sustainable economic activities and protecting water supplies with the aim of ending the one activity that guarantees to destroy it all - large-scale mining.