

# *The Capuchin Corridor*

*Protecting & Restoring the Pacific Forest of Ecuador*





# Introduction

Fly a small plane over the Amazon, and despite the peril it faces, often there’s nothing but vast swaths of forest stretching to the horizon.

Fly that plane over the Pacific Forest of Ecuador and it quickly becomes apparent how little of this great ecosystem still survives.

Bounded by the Pacific Ocean to the west and the Coastal Cordillera to the east, little of this land is protected and much of it is pockmarked by monoculture plantations and badly degraded farms and pastures.

Few landscapes can rival the Pacific Forest in its devastation.

FOREST	INTACT (KM²)	REMAINING
Amazon Forest	5,260,000	80 percent
Madagascar Lowland Forest	13,452	12 percent
Atlantic Forest of Brazil	99,944	8 percent
Sundaland Forest of Indonesia & Malaysia	510,000	7 percent
<i>Pacific Forest of Ecuador</i>	<i>510</i>	<i>2 percent</i>

But what remains of the Pacific Forest can still be saved. And much of what’s been lost can be restored.

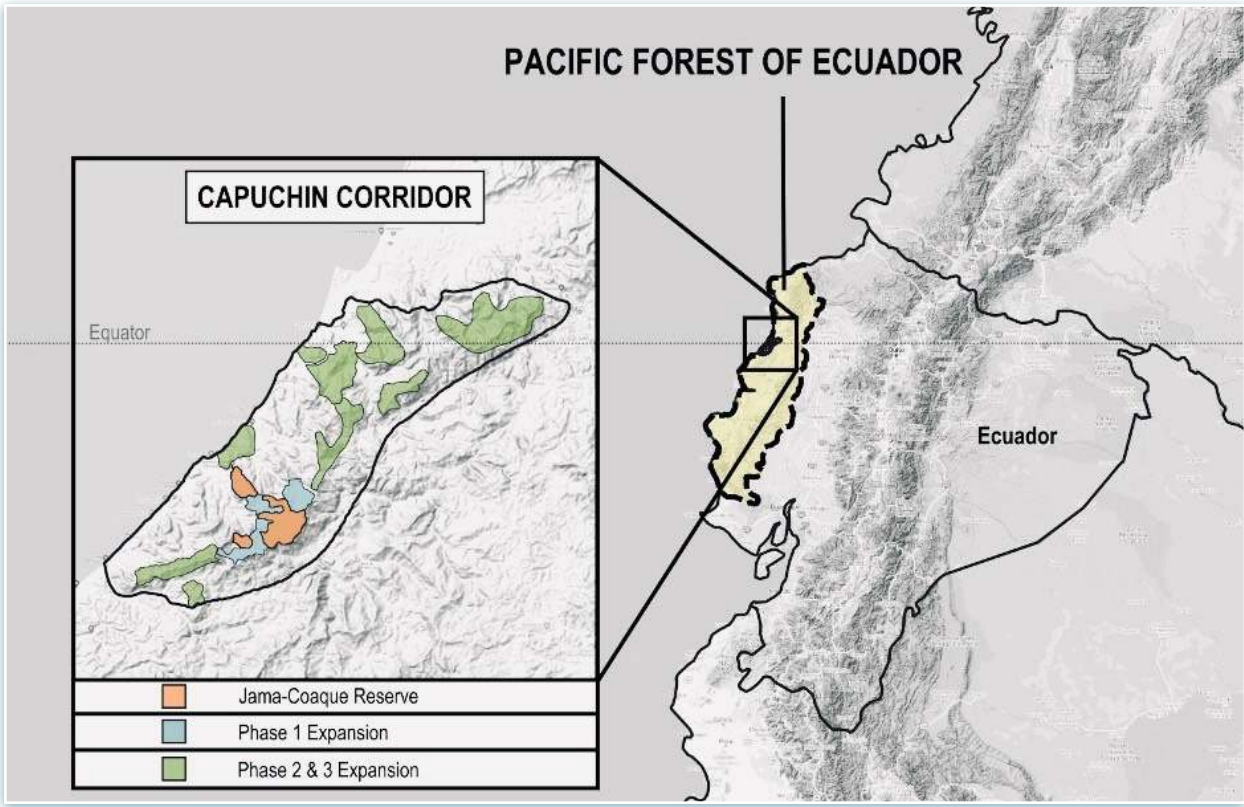
Building on the knowledge and experience gained from working in the Pacific Forest for the past 15 years, TMA is launching the **Capuchin Corridor Project**, named for the critically endangered white-fronted capuchin monkey inhabiting the Pacific Forest.

With the Corridor, TMA will protect, restore, and connect an area of the Pacific Forest spanning more than 91,000 acres (37,000 hectares), conserving the region’s bountiful biodiversity and providing a net climate benefit of approximately **1.7 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub>**.

Overall, the Corridor will:

- Protect all remaining old-growth forest in the proeject area;
- Restore degraded forest on land no longer suitable for agriculture, through assisted natural regeneration;
- Connect isolated forest fragments by transitioning local farmers to regenerative agroforestry; and
- Distribute carbon revenue to local communities in exchange for protecting forests in their home watersheds.

TMA and its partners will begin this project with a six-year plan to create the Capuchin Corridor. TMA seeks **\$8.4 million for the first three years**, with \$1 million in funding committments already secured as of January 2022.



# Background & Context

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## The Biodiversity of the Pacific Forest

The threats facing the Pacific Forest may be surpassed by its diversity of forest types and richness in rare and endangered species.

The Pacific Forest is home to six types of forest: chocó rainforest, premontane cloud forest, moist evergreen forest, semi-deciduous forest, tropical dry forest, and mangrove forest. In the Corridor, all of these forests can be encountered during a single day's hike.

The Pacific Forest also harbors an extraordinary number of species, many of them rare and endangered, including the grey-cheeked parakeet, gray-backed hawk, Mache glassfrog, and of course the Ecuadorian white-fronted capuchin monkey. Overall, the Pacific Forest is home to more than 6,000 species of plants, more than 140 species of amphibians, and more than 450 species of birds.

## The Jama-Coaque Reserve

TMA's Jama-Coaque Reserve protects one of the largest surviving remnants of the Pacific Forest. The Reserve's 1,500 acres (600 hectares) are located in Tumbes-Chocó-Magdalena Biodiversity Hotspot, approximately 5 km from the Pacific Ocean.

TMA started the Jama-Coaque Reserve in 2007, raising \$16,000 to purchase a 100-acre tract of intact forest atop a mountain. In the years since, TMA has steadily purchased a total of 17 properties and incorporated this land into the Reserve, honing a method of conservation and community engagement well suited to rural hillsides and valleys highly prone to deforestation.

The Jama-Coaque Reserve includes a scientific research station that attracts biologists worldwide. It also includes a regenerative agroforestry demonstration site featuring Ecuador's largest repository of the most endangered heirloom cacao variety on earth. Since its inception, there have been zero instances of deforestation in the Jama-Coaque Reserve.

## Community & Conservation

The farming communities surrounding the Jama-Coaque Reserve are extremely poor, with an average income of \$189 per month, based on a recent TMA survey. TMA has always endeavored to be a good neighbor, by providing environmental education, English classes, and a homework assistance program for local children. TMA also has created jobs for local residents in the Reserve and helped build a community center in nearby Camarones for its 320 residents.

More recently, TMA has pioneered an innovative community reforestation program where TMA provides financial assistance and technical support to smallholder farmers to plant trees and transition from conventional agriculture to regenerative agroforestry. This project has increased income levels, sequestered carbon, preserved biodiversity, and contributed to the region's sustainability.

Many neighboring families also recognize the benefits of being so close to the Jama-Coaque Reserve, in the form of greater food security, protected freshwater supplies, more sustainable livelihoods, and growing economic opportunities to sequester carbon in trees and soil.

## TMA & Partners

Third Millennium Alliance (TMA) was established as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in the United States in 2007 and also incorporated in Ecuador in 2010 under the name Third Millennium Alliance – Ecuador. TMA's mission is to preserve the last remnants of the Pacific Forest of Ecuador and work with local communities to reforest what has been lost.

TMA has long partnered with a range of conservation organizations, research universities, financial institutions, and others, such as IUCN-Netherlands, Texas State University, and Rabobank Foundation. For the Corridor project, TMA will draw on the expertise and assistance of Lookfar Conservation. Lookfar is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that supports biodiversity conservation, ecological restoration, and regenerative agriculture projects.



# Strategy

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The strategy behind the Capuchin Corridor Project is grounded in the knowledge and experience TMA has accumulated during 15 years of building and expanding the Jama-Coaque Reserve and working closely with surrounding communities.

This strategy is predicated on (i) restoring and protecting land TMA can purchase outright while also (ii) creating incentives and other opportunities for regenerative agroforestry on land used to support and sustain smallholder farmers living in the project area.

## Protection & Restoration

The Corridor will protect old-growth forest that is still intact and restore forest cover in areas no longer suitable for farming and grazing through assisted natural regeneration.

TMA typically looks to protect land that still contains large tracts of old-growth forest or is no longer suitable for farming or grazing — i.e., far from freshwater sources, on steep hillsides or mountain tops, and not otherwise depended upon to sustain livelihoods.

In the Corridor, this will comprise approximately 22,000 acres (8,800 hectares) and ensure that a substantial core of old-growth and newly restored forest exists to harbor the area's biodiversity, protect freshwater supplies, and sequester carbon.

## Regenerative Agroforestry

The Corridor also will create additional connections among isolated forest fragments through expanded tree cover from regenerative agroforestry initiatives with smallholder farmers. TMA will work with farmers to support them in transitioning to regenerative agroforestry.

Regenerative agroforestry mimics forest ecosystems, with farmers interplanting shade trees, fruit trees, and cash crops, combining the ecological benefits of reforestation with the socio-economic benefits of agriculture. Regenerative agroforestry helps to undermine key drivers of deforestation in the region and creates a more sustainable



alternative to slash and burn agriculture, allowing farmers to raise cash crops while restoring tree cover outside of formally protected areas, connecting otherwise isolated forest remnants.

Regenerative agroforestry also can supplement incomes through the accreditation of carbon sequestered in newly planted trees.

In the Corridor, TMA will make some of the land it purchases available to local farmers that lack land of their own to farm using regenerative agroforestry practices. TMA also will provide financial support and technical assistance to landowners to transition to regenerative agroforestry as part of a payments for ecosystem services program, expanding TMA's existing community reforestation program.

These combined efforts will cover approximately 1,700 acres (700 hectares) in the Corridor.





A sample of the Pacific Forest's biodiversity: the Pacific Royal Flycatcher, a threatened species (above left), the Mache Glassfrog, also a threatened species (below left), and the coastal cloud forests of the Jama-Coaque Reserve (right).



# Project Breakdown

## Protection & Restoration

Approximately 22,000 acres (8,800 hectares) of old-growth forest or degraded land no longer suitable for farming or grazing:

- Purchase land to protect as part of the Jama-Coaque Reserve and, where needed, restore via assisted natural regeneration.\*

## Regenerative Agroforestry

Approximately 1,700 acres (700 hectares) of land still suitable for farming in areas surrounding and connecting protected areas:

- Purchase land for landless families to farm on the condition they practice regenerative agroforestry.
- Pay and support landowners under a payments for ecosystem services program to transition to regenerative agroforestry.

PROTECTION & RESTORATION				
	Size (ha)	Avg. Purchase Cost (\$/ha)	25 Year Mgmt Cost (\$/ha)	Carbon (tCO <sup>2</sup> /ha)
Purchase & Protect/Restore	8,817	\$1,600	\$550	193
REGENERATIVE AGROFORESTRY				
	Size (ha)	Avg. Purchase Cost (\$/ha)	25 Year Mgmt Cost (\$/ha)	Carbon (tCO <sup>2</sup> /ha)
Community Lend-Lease Program	500	\$2,000	\$1,750	159
Farmer Payments Program	200	N/A	\$7,300	159

\* In some cases, TMA may restore and protect land under easements, rather than purchase, managing such land as if it were part of the Jama-Coaque Reserve.

# Funding Request

TMA seeks the following in grant funding for the Corridor. For Years 1-3, TMA seeks \$8.4 million, with \$1 million in funding commitments already secured as of January 2022. This budget represents the entire six-year “creation” phase of the project.

YEAR	PROTECTION & RESTORATION	REGENERATIVE AGROFORESTRY	STAFFING & ADMINISTRATION	ANNUAL TOTALS
Year 1	\$881,281	\$105,000	\$440,000	\$1,426,281
Year 2	\$2,149,830	\$382,000	\$490,000	\$3,021,830
Year 3	\$2,956,453	\$513,000	\$540,000	\$4,009,453
Years 4-6	\$5,210,271	\$1,945,000	\$1,944,000	\$9,099,271
GRAND TOTALS	\$11,197,835	\$2,945,000	\$3,414,000	\$17,556,835

# Conclusion

TMA was founded on the idea that the exploitation of the Pacific Forest of Ecuador over the past century does not and should not define its future. The **Capuchin Corridor Project** will demonstrate that even in the most diminished tropical forests around the world, we can restore what’s been lost and return what’s been taken.

We believe the ambition of the Corridor will inspire others to save forests around the world that, already under threat, might one day be as imperiled as the Pacific Forest of Ecuador.

Key to the Corridor’s ultimate success is TMA’s commitment to pursuing biodiversity protection and climate mitigation as part of a collaborative, community-based process that supports and sustains local livelihoods and cultivates future stewards of the Pacific Forest that share in a common vision of healthy, vibrant ecosystems upon which we all depend.

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