



FORESTS FOREVER

TREES, WATER & PEOPLE • Spring 2024



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AND MORE!



A Letter from Sebastian Africano, *Executive Director*

Our 25th year was one for the books, and we're grateful that you joined us on this journey. More than just a nonprofit organization, Trees, Water & People (TWP) is a community, and we accomplish great things when we work together.

I'm proud to share that in 2024 TWP:

Was invited to work in Mexico, opening up new relationships in Puebla, Veracruz, and Oaxaca with community-based organizations protecting their forest resources.

Co-hosted a Tribal Forest and Fire Summit in New Mexico for over 175 people from 25 Tribes, to ensure Native American communities are involved in restoration decisions before and after forest fires.

Helped establish a **12,650-acre National Wildlife Reserve in Honduras**, ensuring that forest resources and an ancestral water source will be protected for generations to come.

If you've been following us, you know this last win was bittersweet, as we also had our first encounter with the more dangerous side of environmental work in Latin America, when the founder of our community partner, COEAS, was murdered in pursuit of his goal to protect his community's forest.

"Mero," as he was best known, was a beloved member of the community, a loving husband and father, and a dear friend to Trees, Water & People. He died for a simple ideal — to leave future generations of his community with oxygen and water — "something vital to life" as he said in a recent interview.

Real change takes time, and real changemakers think across generations.

TWP is increasing the number of Native and Latin American community-based organizations working in natural resource management, both in Central America and on Tribal Lands in the U.S. Only by involving local communities and investing in youth, can we hope to reverse the damage done to ecosystems over the past centuries.

Generational challenges require long-term, sustained commitment. Please join us in showing the world why Indigenous communities are best positioned to be stewards of the critical biodiversity we have left on this planet.

We thank you for being part of TWP's first 25 years — we're looking forward to the next 25 with you!



Climate Migration *Puts Pressure on* the Next Generation

By Daniela Bueso, Director of the Central America Program

This past September, TWP's Central America Program (CAP) team took an important two-week trip to Honduras and Guatemala. Our first stop was Honduras' capital, Tegucigalpa, where we had the privilege of speaking with our outstanding partners, AHDESA and COEAS, who continue to impress us with their work, innovations, and improving their organizational capacities. In Guatemala, we had the pleasure of meeting our newest TWP team member, Marlen Garcia (CAP Coordinator), reconnecting with our newest partner, FUNDEBASE, while visiting local communities around the Quiché Department, and visiting the community of El Tarral and other efforts by our partner Utz Che'. During our visit, one recurring topic of discussion had an impact on me: the accelerated rate of migrants leaving these countries, and the effect this was having on the people who were left behind. Mostly single mothers and their young children have been left to fend for themselves and survive amidst the continuing devastation of climate change, controversial politics, poverty, and lack of economic opportunities.

During our visit to the community of Chigualmop, Canilla, in the dry corridor of Guatemala, we heard multiple stories of single mothers who were trying to meet basic needs for their families, after their husbands had fled the country for better opportunities up north. In each household, we met children learning to advance their opportunities

through FUNDEBASE's initiatives. FUNDEBASE's goal is to help families increase food sovereignty, create community gardens, and host workshops on how to sell produce as an alternative income source. As we toured through the community, mothers and their kids showed us their gardens, explaining each crop's use and saleability for the local market. They also shared food, seeds, and produce, showing the humility and deep connection that these families had with each other.

I can't put into words how these touching and tearful stories impacted me: learning how hard these families were working just to get by, seeing children take part in new opportunities or taking time from school to help their mothers with home duties and gardening — all with big smiles on their faces as they followed in their mother's footsteps.

At TWP one of our main priorities is Youth Development, which we define as: "acknowledging that the next generation will inherit the earth, and need to be involved in its care today." This speaks volumes! The Central America team is committed to continue working with local organizations that put first the needs of those left behind; support them to have dignified livelihood; create opportunities tailored to families, single mothers, and their children; and invest in other incentives that provide more economic opportunities for the next generation.

Collaborative Resilience

Treston Chee, Indigenous Lands Program Content Creator

In a groundbreaking gathering from January 29 – February 1, 2024, the inaugural Tribal Forest and Fire Summit convened at Santa Ana Pueblo, New Mexico, uniting over 175 participants from 22 Pueblos, Tribes, and Native nations. Organized by Trees, Water & People’s (TWP) Indigenous Lands Program (ILP), this catalyzing event also welcomed a broad spectrum of agencies and nonprofits from across the state.

Hosted in the heart of New Mexico, the summit emerged as a vital platform for Tribal voices to spearhead discussions and forge collaborative pathways throughout the Southwest and beyond. John Waconda, Indigenous Partnerships Director with The Nature Conservancy, highlighted the event’s significance, stating, “As in history, collaboration among Tribes in the Southwest has been paramount. This kind of collaboration can strengthen cultural and traditional movements needed to not only support the communities but also the land we live on.”

Santa Ana Pueblo Governor Myron Armijo opened the summit with a prayer, leading into workshops and presentations aimed at addressing shared challenges in Tribal forestry management. TWP’s ILP Director James Calabaza highlighted the necessity of unity, stressing the significance of collaboration in tackling common issues.

Leaders in Tribal forestry and fire programs participated

in the summit, discussing methodologies, natural burning practices, and youth engagement in stewardship activities. Field tours showcased effective management practices, adding a practical dimension to the summit. Plans for the next annual summit include involving more Tribal leadership and expanding invitations to political figures to further enhance dialogues.

Lindsey Quam, New Mexico Forestry Division Deputy State Forester & Tribal Liaison, underscored the pressing nature of these challenges: “The climate isn’t waiting around for us to catch up.” The summit stood as a testament to the power of shared wisdom and collective action.

The ILP is dedicated to improving climate resilience and preserving the cultural lifeways of Native peoples in the Southwest, promoting a united effort to protect and preserve landscapes and cultural values. This summit marked a significant step forward in empowering Native American Tribes to manage their natural resources through a blend of Western science and Indigenous stewardship values.

As we look forward to the next Tribal Forest and Fire Summit, we’ll consider the foundation laid by this inaugural event that promises to foster stronger collaborations, enhance stewardship practices, and create a brighter future for forest management and fire mitigation in the American Southwest.



A Natural Connection

John Waconda, Indigenous Partnerships Director with The Nature Conservancy

Empowering the Tribes and Pueblos of the Southwest

Originating from Pueblo-led forest restoration projects in New Mexico, the collaboration of Trees, Water & People and The Nature Conservancy was developed to share vision, experience, determination, and our Pueblo connections, in order to further the efforts of stewarding valuable Tribal forests. Both nongovernmental organizations share similar goals to sustain, enhance, and protect forests; as well as further Tribal self-determination and build capacity. It was a natural connection for us to work together to convene community leaders and share knowledge, assist in Tribal planning, and financially support Tribal-led forestry and fire projects.

Strengthening Tribal partnerships and building meaningful, trusted relationships with Pueblo governments — bringing

rare philanthropic attention and assistance to underserved communities — is at the core of this work. Developing and supporting Tribal coalitions and empowering their abilities to work closer together while developing capacity is an important and ambitious goal. It has elevated our combined abilities to address many challenges such as climate change, sustaining and protecting valued natural resources, and strengthening Tribal tradition, culture, and communities. Together we are fostering a positive future for the Indigenous Southwest.

We see great opportunities in this work and are pleased to see the energy that this partnership has created. The possibilities of working together with Tribes is enormous, and we look forward to this growing and evolving.



25  years helping people and the planet
TREES, WATER & PEOPLE



Thanks for celebrating ~~~~~
25 years with us!





Caminando hacia el *Buen Vivir*

For translation scan the QR code above or visit <https://twp.org/blog/walking-towards-buen-vivir>

Por Pedro Camajá Botón, Director FUNDEBASE

Con una sólida trayectoria, FUNDEBASE ha caminado de la mano de las comunidades Indígenas campesinas en Guatemala por 28 años. La organización se ha comprometido a respetar y preservar el conocimiento, la sabiduría y la cosmovisión Maya, centrándose en la producción de alimentos mediante la agroecología. Este enfoque ha permitido mejorar la calidad de vida de aproximadamente 10 mil familias, garantizando alimentos nutritivos, variados y suficientes.

El departamento de Quiché, enfrenta adversidades históricas significativas. La mayoría de sus habitantes pertenecen al pueblo maya K'iche', que sufre un índice de pobreza del 89%, con un 35% en extrema pobreza. Además, la desnutrición infantil alcanza alarmantes niveles del 60%. La población lleva las cicatrices del conflicto armado (1960 - 1996), una masacre de alrededor de 344 personas que les afectó profundamente.

Quiché tampoco es inmune a los impactos del cambio climático. Sequías prolongadas, escasez de lluvias, aumento de enfermedades debido a temperaturas extremas e incendios forestales en el corredor seco han afectado la producción agrícola, causando hasta 8 meses de inseguridad alimentaria para la población.

Es en este contexto desafiante que, en 2023, FUNDEBASE inició una colaboración con Trees, Water & People (TWP)

para apoyar a 16 familias. El proyecto se extendió a siete comunidades, beneficiando a 175 familias en total, en pro de la soberanía alimentaria.

Tras casi un año de trabajo conjunto, se han fortalecido las habilidades para la producción de alimentos, evidenciado en huertos de hortalizas, plantas medicinales, árboles frutales, gestión del agua y cuidado de animales domésticos.

Además, el proceso de reflexión, formación e intercambio de experiencias y conocimientos han contribuido a aumentar la autoestima de las familias, promoviendo una mayor participación para mejorar su calidad de vida.

Una promotora en el campo laboral menciona que, desde que se unió a FUNDEBASE, ha aprendido a cultivar su parcela de manera más eficiente y a cuidar a sus animales domésticos. Ahora produce alimentos con la colaboración de su familia y genera ingresos con la venta de hierbas nativas en mercados locales.

TWP y FUNDEBASE continuarán uniendo esfuerzos para fortalecer la organización a nivel comunitario. El enfoque estará en aspectos vitales: la producción de alimentos, el cuidado del suelo, la gestión adecuada del agua y la recuperación y conservación de bosques, apoyando la búsqueda continua del Buen Vivir.

THE GREAT ONE

After a unanimous congressional vote on February 27, 12,620 acres of forest and a water source serving 5,000 families will be permanently protected as the Wildlife Refuge of Suyapa, Luís Hernán Baca Valladares, “MERO.”

“Mero” means “the great one” in Honduras, and was the nickname given to the founder and president of Trees, Water & People’s partner, COEAS. He started this volunteer organization 37 years ago to protect his community’s water and forest from the growing capital city, Tegucigalpa.

In December 2023, he was murdered for his cause, and two months later his struggle has been memorialized through the creation of Honduras’ 95th protected area, bearing his name.

Martyrdom shouldn’t be the cost of achieving protections for the environment. Unfortunately in Latin America it is far too common, and the higher the stakes, the more dangerous it gets. But when the consequences of inaction outweigh the dangers of action, people stand up and face the danger together, as a community.

Today we celebrate the brave warriors of the Aldea de Suyapa and their ecological committee, COEAS, who have persevered in spite of tremendous odds against them. They make us proud to do the work that we do at TWP, because when they succeed, we succeed.

May their forest stand for the benefit of all future generations, and may the stories of this group of individuals and their fearless leader, Mero, reverberate through history.

Felicidades compañeros... Los amamos.





Building Momentum

by Jenny Bramhall – co-founder, Trees, Water & People

Stuart Conway and Jenny Bramhall, co-founders of Trees, Water & People

Trees, Water & People (TWP) is 26 years old? That can't be right. The years that Stuart and I spent creating and building TWP remind me of the years raising our three children. There were months of momentum and optimism that raced by at a gallop, and also moments of loss and challenges that felt like we would never make it through. All in all, we have been so proud and hopeful about this organization we were privileged to create, becoming more meaningful and impactful than anything we could have imagined when we started.

The vision for TWP began when Stuart, Richard Fox, and I sat in the basement of Union Station in Washington, D.C., brainstorming about a nonprofit that cared about the environment and about the people living in that environment with equal ferocity. We wanted to plant trees and protect watersheds alongside those who lived near them. We envisioned how much good we could do with scant resources just from friends' donations.

Stuart and Richard were a powerful team as co-executive directors. We were thrilled by the many talented people who

came to work for us or serve on the board. And I cannot say enough about how much we learned from our community partners: finding and fostering those local relationships has been a nonnegotiable pillar of our work.

Day-by-day, we were humbled by the beauty and insight of the folks living in the communities we served and grateful for the brave generosity of those who donated.

TWP has grown in so many important ways, and defining our five mission priorities — dignified livelihoods, environmental stewardship, gender equity and inclusion, Indigenous sovereignty, and youth development — has helped us stay on track as we grow. And our staff has come to reflect the diversity of those we serve.

Finding Sebastian Africano — first as a barely paid intern in Honduras and now as executive director — was a great stroke of luck for our beloved nonprofit. Sebastian has grown into an influential, big-hearted, tireless leader who has guided TWP into the new level of changemaking. His leadership will be so important as we face political and economic uncertainty.

To all who have contributed to TWP over these 26 years, I give a huge abrazo and a heartfelt thank you. I just can't wait to see what amazing things we can all achieve working together in the decades to come.

Reducing Your Organization's Carbon Footprint

Corporations and organizations are more aware of their responsibility in managing their emissions to benefit our planet's health. The challenge is knowing where to start! Many begin by identifying emission reduction strategies and developing a plan to achieve reduction targets.

Understanding the Carbon Footprint

A carbon footprint is the sum of greenhouse gasses emitted each year by an individual, family, or organization. This includes direct emissions from sources an organization controls, such as company facilities and vehicles, as well as indirect emissions from electricity, supply chains, heating, or cooling.

Recent EPA data shows that 24% of global emissions originates from industry. With the rise of high-quality emission-reduction projects around the world, however, industries reduce emissions by funding these projects and benefit people and the planet in the process. Trees, Water & People's (TWP) clean cookstove program is one example of an initiative that improves family health, creates jobs, reduces environmental degradation and reduces CO₂ emissions.

Some Quick Strategies

- **Energy Efficiency:** Begin with a comprehensive audit of your current energy use. Focus on utilizing energy-efficient equipment, and enhancing heating and cooling systems.
- **Rethinking Air Travel:** Consider the environmental costs of air travel. Opt for attending conferences remotely when possible.
- **Ecocommute and Efficiency Rewards:** Launch an ecocommute program to encourage employee carpooling, biking, or public transportation. Offer remote workdays to eliminate the need for daily commutes.
- **Sustainable Procurement Practices:** By actively choosing environmentally friendly suppliers and products that prioritize sustainability, your organization can make a meaningful difference.



Reflecting on Our Shared Responsibility

By purchasing carbon offsets that support TWP's Justa cookstove program, your business can fund the construction and use of efficient cookstoves in Central America to not only reduce emissions, but also enhance family livelihoods and create green jobs.

Contact TWP Carbon Program Manager Sela Mumuli at sela@treeswaterpeople.org to learn more about TWP's cookstove program and how we can right-size your offset goals to achieve impact together.

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Learn more by scanning the QR code above
or visiting twp.org/dafs

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Trees, Water & People has been working for 25
years to improve people's lives by helping commu-
nities to protect, conserve, and manage the natural
resources upon which their
long-term well-being depends.

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