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Dr. Ariel E. Lugo Announces Retirement as Director of the International Institute of Tropical Forestry [1]

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San Juan, PR, March 29 2021— Dr. Ariel E. Lugo, Director of the International Institute of Tropical Forestry (Institute) for more than two decades will be retiring on May 2 from the USDA Forest Service after more than 42 years of public service. He has enjoyed a distinguished career in federal service and scientific research, which began when he worked for the Council on Environmental Quality under the Jimmy Carter Administration. He became a project leader in 1979 for the Tropical America Research Work Unit of the Southern Research Station and in 1993, he became Director of the Institute. Dr. Lugo has actively been involved in the study of tropical forests and is a highly cited scientist with over 550 publications and over 41,000 citations to his work.

During his tenure with the Forest Service Dr. Lugo has focused attention in developing the public profile of the Institute, a conservation ethic for Puerto Rico and other tropical countries, and providing education and research opportunities to under-represented communities and individuals. More recently, under his leadership, the Institute is involved in seeking resilient solutions to the conservation problems associated with the Anthropocene Epoch.

Upon his retirement, Dr. Lugo will serve as a Scientist Emeritus of the Forest Service. This Emeritus status will allow Dr. Lugo to voluntarily complete critical research that sustains health and resiliency of Tropical Forests in the United States and abroad.

Dr. Lugo has received numerous recognitions from the USDA Forest Service as a Distinguished Scientist and from other organizations such as the Smithsonian Latino Center Legacy Award in the Sciences and as a Forest Hero by the United Nations Forests for People Awards. Lugo is also a life member of the Ecological Society of America, honorary fellow of the Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation, and member of the editorial boards of *Ecosystems*, *Ecology and Society*, and *Acta Científica*.

Dr. Lugo also served as the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Resource Analysis for the Puerto Rico Department of Natural Resources and was a professor at the University of Florida in Gainesville prior to his federal career. He is a native of Mayaguez and was educated in public schools, the University of Puerto Rico (BS and MS), and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (PhD).

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