

Federal Forest Service appoints Dr. Grizelle Gonzalez director of the International Tropical Forestry Institute ^[1]

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Río Piedras, Puerto Rico (March 14, 2022) - The U.S. Forest Service announced the appointment of Puerto Rican scientist Grizelle González as director of the International Institute of Tropical Forestry (IITF).

Dr. González will assume, as of today, the position held for 40 years by scientist emeritus Ariel E. Lugo, and before him, the pioneer of the study and conservation of forests in Puerto Rico, Frank H. Wadsworth. In this way, she becomes the first woman to direct the Institute.

Dr. González is currently project leader and deputy director of the Institute's research unit, where she directs the efforts of more than 150 scientists, from different sectors, who guide the science, administration and communication of studies related to tropical forests and grasslands, from 10 countries and in collaboration with 45 institutions.

"The Institute's mission, which began more than eight decades ago, will continue to focus on the development and communication of the best available science for the understanding and sustainable management of our tropical forests. Looking ahead, I am excited to lead, in collaboration with multiple sectors of our society, the development and implementation of forestry programs that comprehensively address the social, economic and environmental needs of Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and the broader Caribbean region," said González.

"The Institute will focus on assessing the effects of climate change, and how land use and land cover changes affect forest ecosystem functions. Similarly, we are interested in green infrastructure in the urban environment, as these spaces provide important social-ecological services for the health of our society," he added.

Dr. Gonzalez joined IITF in 2000, after completing doctoral studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Previously, she worked at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks, and co-led seven expeditions for educational and scientific purposes in the Canadian Arctic and Alaska.

She was the first Puerto Rican scientist permanently hired by the Institute in 2003. Since then, her leadership roles have been on the rise. She was director of the Sabana Field Station, between 2003 and 2018 and leader of the research unit from 2012 to 2017. That year, she was named deputy director of IITF, and had highlights as deputy director for Research at the federal Forest Service's Southern Research Station in North Carolina and as Supervisor of the El Yunque National Forest. She also led research efforts in the aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017. As a scientist, she has published the results of her research in multiple journals, and is an adjunct professor at several universities on the island.

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