

US Forest Service Signs Collaborative Agreement With Citizen's Committee for Conservation of El Yunque National Forest ^[1]

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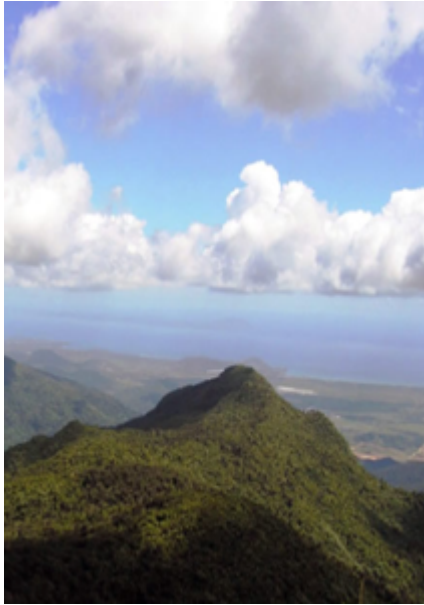
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El Yunque National Forest

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July 14, 2016 (Rio Piedras, PR) US Forest Service is signing an important agreement with the Citizens Committee for Public Participation (CCPP) to continue working in collaboration on the conservation of El Yunque National Forest.

The committee came together as a result of the interest to improve collaboration and community involvement during the forest plan revision process that started in 2012. The revision of the plan establishes a strong commitment to an all-lands approach to conserve high-priority forest ecosystems and provide social opportunities and economic benefits to both visitors and local communities. The plan promotes conservation of sustainable water production and quality, protecting wetlands and riparian areas; providing for sustainable recreation opportunities and other ecosystems services that support local economies; protecting sensitive species; and managing the forest to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

The initial role of the CCPP was to collaborate in developing ways to engage with the communities on future management of the Forest and increase the connections with the areas and communities surrounding the Forest. The collaborative group encompasses various sectors such as NGOS, local businesses, tourism enterprises, community leaders, academics, professionals of various backgrounds and interested citizens, agencies that have assisted in the development of effective collaboration and outreach efforts during the planning process and are committed to continuing with collaborative Plan implementation and co-management efforts.

The signing of the collaborative agreement between the CCPP and US Forest Service reaffirms their commitment to continuing collaborative implementation and co-management efforts under the direction of the revised Forest Plan.

“We care about this land, and we are here together because we want to be sure this place is here for our kids, our families and our communities,” said Sharon Wallace, El Yunque Forest Supervisor.

The draft Forest Plan and Environmental Impact Statement will soon be available for public comment. A series of public meetings and outreach events will be held in August and September to discuss the planning process and documents. Times and locations of these meetings will be posted on the Forest website. More information on the Forest planning process and collaboration efforts can be found at the Forest website:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/elyunque/landmanagement/planning> [2] or on Facebook:

Colaboracion Bosque Nacional El Yunque or Centro Para La Conservación del Paisaje.

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