



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

PANAMA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 9, 2011

Fact Sheet No.: FS-04-11 (E)

Press Office Tel.: 202-712-4320

Public Information Tel.: 202-712-4810

Email: usaid-panamainfo@usaid.gov

<http://www.usaid.gov>

FACT SHEET

NATURAL RESOURCES AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION



Photo Credit: USAID / FCD Activity

Promoting Sustainable Community Forestry and legal harvesting through the implementation of best practices in the Darien

Panama is rich in natural resources, which are immensely important to both the international community and the people of Panama. Because of its unique geographical position as a "bridge" between two large continents, Panama supports a biologically rich collection of flora and fauna. Panama's forests contain more species than any other country in North and Central America. It hosts the southernmost range of North American species as well as the northernmost range of South American species – creating remarkable biodiversity. Panama also serves as a migratory path for birds crossing the continents of North and South America. With coastlines along both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, Panama boasts equally impressive marine resources.

There are 97 protected areas in Panama, comprising almost 38% of the national territory that conserve the best representation of its remarkable natural resources. Two of these protected areas, including the Darien National Park, are recognized internationally as both World Heritage Sites and Biosphere Reserves.

Support from the United States Government through USAID's *Sustainable Community Forestry Activity* is critical to the overall environmental health of the expansive Choco-Darien eco-region. Through this program, USAID is working in two forest dependent indigenous reserves or *comarcas*, the Kuna Wargandí and the Emberá-Wounaan, to improve biodiversity by promoting sustainable forest management of indigenous lands, and other environmentally-friendly economic activities.

To increase environmental and economic benefits in these communities, sustainable forest and harvesting operations management are targeted to increase revenues while mitigating the environmental impact. Community members are involved in all aspects of management, from development of plans for forest use to decision-making on division and use of revenues generated. USAID assistance also supports economic diversification to complement timber harvesting revenues by promoting and improving non-timber forest products, agro-forestry through an integrated approach of land-use systems, and environmental services.