

## Amazon Amigos Report for TREE Foundation 10.14.09

The TREE Foundation's co-sponsorship of the Amazon Amigos donation program had a good launch in its first year. Contributions totaled over \$10,000 in support of the Peruvian non-profit Conservación de la Naturaleza Amazónica del Perú, A.C (CONAPAC). Contributors were primarily teachers, students, and parents who had first hand experience in the Amazon Rainforest and personal knowledge of CONAPAC's track record. Travelers most often become acquainted with CONAPAC's work through their hands-on involvement on volunteer service days.



Marcos Oversluijs, a TREE Foundation intern in 2007, continues to direct the Amazon Amigos sponsored projects at CONAPAC. As a trained scientist, Marcos infuses his knowledge about the environment into the execution of on-the-ground initiatives. CONAPAC's approach to conservation in the Amazon relies on a holistic approach to ecological education, sustainable development, and reducing poverty among local people who live in the Rainforest along the Amazon and its tributaries near Iquitos, Peru.



During the year, CONAPAC staged village workshops, managed service projects, planted trees, and worked hand-in-hand with community members to encourage them to live in harmony with their environment.



While logging interests continue to put pressure on vital trees, CONAPAC's presence and environmental values-based education over the last 13 years pays off each year in ways that are evident through personal anecdotes. During a service project in the village of Yanamono II, it was discovered that a logging company had approached the village with promises of a weed whacker in exchange for allowing them to cut down some of the nearby old growth trees. Cutting grass is labor intensive as villagers use machetes to keep the grass and plant life short around community buildings and on soccer fields. A weed whacker would make life much easier. This village chose their trees over the lawn equipment.

Part of Amazon Amigos' contributions will support clean water, a basic need for Amazonians. Since the spring of 2009, CONAPAC has installed five new water treatment plants in villages along the Amazon and hosted five water workshops. The first workshop was conducted in July in the community of Santa Teresa with approximately 200 people from the community attending (from a population of about 350 or 75 families). CONAPAC's simple system to create water plants starts with parts readily available in Iquitos. The four-stage filter system is partially assembled in Iquitos and transported by boat to the community for final construction involving community and volunteers.

CONAPAC's multi-pronged approach supporting basic needs, conservation, environmental education, and sustainable development continues to score high marks where the effect of every dollar is multiplied several times over. We look forward to another year in support of this worthy initiative.

*(submitted by Frances Gatz)*

