

INVITED SYMPOSIUM

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CONSERVATION CONCESSIONS: A NEW TOOL FOR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION IN THE TROPICS.

Conservation of biodiversity-rich habitats presents a challenge to nations wishing to develop their natural resources for economic ends. Logging, mining and other resource-development activities offer the prospect of tangible economic benefits but are often environmentally destructive. Although sustainable resource management seeks to provide these benefits while conserving natural ecosystems, experience suggests that a number of obstacles limit both the adoption of sustainable practices and their usefulness in conservation strategies.

To address this problem, the Center for Applied Biodiversity Science at Conservation International (CI) has been working in collaboration with Hardner & Gullison Associates, LLC, to develop the concept of a "conservation concession," a novel approach that seeks to directly reconcile resource protection with development. Under a conservation concession agreement, national authorities or local resource users agree to protect natural ecosystems in exchange for a steady stream of structured compensation from conservationists or other investors. The conservation concession thus presents an alternative opportunity for countries to capitalize on vast tracks of forest or other areas of high conservation value.

In our presentation we will describe the structure of a conservation concession agreement and our experience to date in implementing concessions in a variety of different contexts around the world.

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Symposium title: Direct payments as an alternative approach to conservation investment.