

## EcoMadera

**N**ot long ago, Cristobal Colón, in the rainforests of northwestern Ecuador, was a typical impoverished rural community. Facing dire circumstances and intense economic hardships, many were forced to find relief by exploiting the one commodity they have left: their forestland. By cutting these trees or converting the land to agriculture, the communities are able to earn a subsistence living, but it comes at the cost of a precious natural resource. It is a vicious cycle for these rural communities, and The

EcoMadera Project seeks to stop it through an innovative approach that combines economic development and forest conservation.



Since 2002, The Pinchot Institute and its partners have been working in Cristobal Colón to educate local residents on the economic benefits of forest conservation, teach them the raw skills needed to create high-end wood products, build the infrastructure necessary to bring those items to market, and create a locally owned woodworking business that returns profits to the community. EcoMadera helps create strong market incentives for forest and biodiversity conservation by offering significantly higher prices for wood harvested sustainably than the existing markets pay for forest

exploitation. There is now a 60% price premium for products created using sustainable wood. By creating high-value finished products from sustainably managed trees, these

communities can earn more money than they would if they simply clear-cut their land or converted it to agriculture.

- **Demonstrating** a new and highly successful model for sustainable forestry in the tropics
- **Transforming** an impoverished community through sustainable forestry
- **Breaking the cycle** of unsustainable economic exploitation of natural resources

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A program of



EcoMadera balsa tree nursery

## Sustainable Communities

Because of EcoMadera, local land tenure rights now have the force of law, the surrounding forest and its extraordinary biodiversity are being sustained, and economic conditions for the local community are the best they have ever been.

The locally owned wood products enterprise is the community's single largest generator of local income and employment. EcoMadera has also been instrumental in two firsts for the community: the construction of a local health clinic and a police station. EcoMadera demonstrates that sustainable forestry innovations are not only capable of protecting imperiled natural resources, but also revitalizing developing communities.



Leaf, flower, and fruit samples are collected and taken to the National Herbarium for identification

The EcoMadera project benefits from the support of the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation; the World Land Trust; the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; and the Overbrook Foundation.



Forest research team tagging trees and taking measurements from the permanent forest research parcel

Community leaders, Peace Corps Volunteers, and Pinchot Institute staff at the founding of the EcoMadera community forestry project

