



Welcome! To the inaugural issue of *El Bosque Pluvial* (The Rain Forest), your Caribbean National Forest's new quarterly newsletter. Each succeeding issue will be packed with useful facts and interesting stories about America's only tropical rain forest and its employees, who work so hard to provide a meaningful and enjoyable experience for our visitors from all over the world.



INSIDE THE FALL ISSUE:

- Alternate Transportation Modes Studied.* 2
- CNF's Blanca Ruiz receives R8 "Interpreter of the Year" award.* 2
- Congress approves El Toro Wilderness Area In Caribbean NF.* 3
- Computers for Kids! CNF donates surplus PCs to local schools.* 3
- Forest Spotlight:** 4
Jeff Walker, Heritage Resource Archeologist.
- Customer Survey completed in forest's recreation area.* 4

**From the Forest Supervisor's Desk:
"Sustainable Resource Management and the Caribbean NF"**

Recently, I was asked by an interviewer from our Washington office: "What does the Caribbean NF do to foster sustainability?" I replied that I consider sustainability the single most important and relevant issue facing national, state and private forests today; but, since I am prohibited from working outside the National Forest System, I foster sustainability on the island by helping the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico to maintain vital ecosystems by assisting them in their sustainability planning, and by providing them with educational and technical assistance. By doing so, I can be confident that any agreements made between the Caribbean NF and Commonwealth agencies are correct and

will stand the test of time. In addition, when private lands border a forest or other vital socio-ecosystem, I try to help landowners comprehend the importance of maintaining sustainability by illustrating the potential danger to sustainability implicit in haphazard development programs.

Because my budget is limited, I have no funds to spare for private lands projects, I reach out to communities and influence landowners by collaborating with non-government organizations. Together, we map out our separate areas of responsibility and get vital jobs accomplished.

Social, economic and environmental forces present many challenges to the sustainable



Caribbean NF Supervisor
Pablo Cruz

management of our island's natural resources. Urbanization is creating a huge social impact on communities near the forest. Not too long ago, neighboring communities were mostly rural, with rural values and customs. Recently, a new and different set of urban values

(Continued on page 3)

EXCITING NEW ATTRACTION AT EL PORTAL RAIN FOREST CENTER!



The Caribbean National Forest's El Portal Rain Forest Center has something brand new and exciting for you and your children to enjoy!

El Portal Director Jose R. Ortega recently announced the installation of four

fascinating Nature Dioramas in the "Understanding the Forest" pavilion, on the center's upper level. Each diorama displays astonishingly life-like wildlife figures portrayed

(Continued on page 2)

Alternate Transportation Mode for Caribbean National Forest Studied

The goal of the Caribbean NF is to Provide safe, stress-free access to it's recreation areas.

The forest has a greater capacity to accommodate people than it does vehicles. PR road 191 provides access to the forest's recreation area; it is narrow and winding, quickly congested with cars and buses during peak visitation.

In cooperation with the local Department of Transportation. We analyzed traffic and congestion with a transportation study We concluded that we had neither the technical data nor the expertise to provide a meaningful analysis.

In 1997 both agencies contributed \$150,000 to employ a local engineering firm to study the problem in depth. Their analysis, *Transportation and Access Study for the Caribbean National Forest* looked at 20 years of forest road usage, population growth and increased forest use. It recommended an Alternative Transportation Mode as the preferred means to address both current and future capacity and congestion on the PR 191 recreation corridor.

A second study was performed under separate contract that identified further alternatives.

Since then, the results of the studies have been discussed in public meetings, with technical committees, special interest groups and with the PR Tourism Company. The final study will be completed in September 2006.

Final public meetings were held in July 2006 and the Preferred Alternative Transportation Method was identified.

Stay tuned! We will keep you up-to-date on this important story in future issues of El Bosque Pluvial.

Caribbean National Forest's Blanca Ruiz earns Southern Region's prestigious Interpreter of the Year Award!

On August 8, 2006, Blanca Ruiz was notified that she had been awarded the prestigious "Interpreter of the Year Award" in the Forest Service's Southern Region.

Each year the award is given to the person whose contributions towards the advancement of the interpretive profession or the field of conservation education was judged

"Blanca Ruiz is the driving force of Conservation Education in this, our nation's only Tropical Rain Forest."

Eng. Manuel Ortiz
Customer Service Team Leader
Caribbean National Forest

most significant. Each regional winner is eligible to be nominated for the national "Gifford Pinchot Excellence in Interpretation and Conservation Education" award, which is presented at the annual National Association of Interpreters meeting, to be held in November in Albuquerque , New Mexico.

WELL DONE BLANCA!

EXCITING NEW ATTRACTION AT THE EL PORTAL RAIN FOREST CENTER!

(Continued from page 1)
in carefully crafted replicas of their rain-forest habitats.

Ortega suggests that you bring your children along; together you will discover lots of "neat stuff" that you didn't know before about the forest's tiny lizards, coquis and invertebrates. You'll get a special, "insider's look" at

the lifestyles of these tiny forest animals.

When you leave the center, you can add to your enjoyment by hiking the exciting El Portal Nature Trail. By now, you and your family will have developed a closer bond with the "real" animals you encounter on the nature trail!

Forest Supervisor, Pablo Cruz says: "We are very pleased to offer these new nature dioramas; we are sure they will give our visitors important and exciting insights into the lives of these small animals that are such an important part of the Caribbean National Forest's ecological family."

From the Forest Supervisor's desk: Sustainable Resource Management

(Continued from page 1)

are beginning to impact the old rural values. Urbanization, in particular the rural-urban interface has begun to foster huge conflicts between urban and rural systems. Another pressing social problem is related to economics. Unemployment on our island is at 10 percent. Compared with unemployment figures from other Caribbean island, that's quite low. But the Caribbean NF is located on the northeast end of the island where a naval base that was a primary source of employment was closed two years ago. The closing of the base resulted in a 20 percent increase in unemployment in the northeastern corridor. As a consequence, we have seen an increase in crime and the sale

and use of drugs in our neighboring communities.

Regarding environmental forces, there is a huge polarization between environmentalists and developers. National environmental groups such as the Sierra Club and Greenpeace have local affiliates here. We are not at all excluded from the environmental politics of the mainland United States. There is an ongoing battle between environmentalists and developers that typically converges in the government. The environmentalists, the developers and the government often work at cross-purposes. Whichever group can exert the most influence on the other groups can usually see their plans or desires implemented.

Puerto Rico has always had a policy of sustainable development. Because polarization creates so many problems, government does a poor job in trying to consolidate environmental and developmental values.

Well, I'm out of space. I've enjoyed this opportunity to share some of my ideas with you. Be sure to read El Bosque Pluvial's winter edition; among other subjects, I'll share with you how the Caribbean NF helps developers use open spaces in a sustainable manner.

Hasta pronto!

Pablo

El Toro Wilderness Area designated by Congress

On Jan. 19, 2006, Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns marked the designation of the first tropical wilderness in the Western Hemisphere, the El Toro Wilderness, part of the Caribbean National Forest in Puerto Rico.

"The El Toro Wilderness represents an area of unique ecological and biological diversity," said Johanns. "This wilderness designation will help to protect critical habitat for

generations to come and preserves the natural condition of the land, providing outstanding opportunities to enjoy an unconfined wilderness experience."

The Caribbean National Forest Act of 2005 designated nearly 10,000 acres of the Caribbean National Forest and the Luquillo Experimental Forest as a wilderness area, more than one-third of the forest's 28,000 acres. The El Toro Wilderness is named after the highest mountain peak (3,524 feet) in the

forest. It is the first ever federal wilderness area in a tropical forest, and is also the first wilderness area in a Puerto Rico forest.

"The El Toro Wilderness represents an area of unique ecological and biological diversity,"

Computers for Kids!

Recently, the Caribbean National Forest donated 14 surplus Personal Computers to three schools in local communities. The schools receiving the computers were the Pitahaya Community School, the Georgina Baquero Community School and the Antonio Rios Secondary School.

All three schools are located on the island's northeast corridor, in areas adjacent to the Caribbean National Forest.

Forest Supervisor Pablo Cruz indicated that the computers, all in excellent condition and ready to use, had recently been replaced by newer, updated units. Cruz stated that the President's Executive Order number 12999 allows federal agencies to donate excess equipment to educational institutions with the stated objective of "raising student's knowledge of new technology."

He noted that "the Caribbean National

Forest is particularly committed to helping our surrounding communities by sharing the burden of educating our children; it is vitally important to teach our children the tremendous value of our natural resources, and to show them how it is possible to act together to conserve them for future generations."

CARIBBEAN NATIONAL FOREST NEWSLETTER EL BOSQUE PLUVIAL

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*Access our website at:
www.fs.fed.us/r8/caribbean, in
both Spanish and English!*

FOREST SPOTLIGHT



In this issue we focus the **FOREST SPOTLIGHT** on Jeff Walker, the U.S. Forest Service Heritage Resources Archeologist at the Caribbean National Forest.

Dr. Walker has spent over 25 years working in the Luquillo mountains in northeastern Puerto Rico. He is an acknowledged expert in lithic technology (the making of stone tools) and in the interpretation of petroglyphs (writings on stone) of the island's aboriginal Taino people. The Taino are thought to have inhabited Puerto Rico for over five hundred years before the arrival of Columbus on his second voyage of discovery.



Jeff was born in Pullman, Washington in 1951. As a youngster he moved to Puerto Rico with his family. His father was a professor of entomology at the Mayagüez campus of the University of Puerto Rico, and his mother, an anthropologist, taught at the Inter-American University in San German.

Young Jeff was exposed to Puerto Rican culture and became fluent in Spanish at an early age. He obtained his baccalaureate degree at Antioch College in Ohio and his masters and doctoral degrees at Washington State University.

Jeff, his wife and daughters have a lovely home in the Luquillo mountains which they share with Manoa, their Labrador retriever.

Caribbean National Forest Customer Survey Completed

During the summer months, you may have noticed Forest Service employees stationed at nature trailheads and along roads in the Caribbean National Forest's recreation area. They were wearing bright orange vests and were standing near a sign that read: "Traffic Survey Ahead".

They were waiting to talk with our visitors, who were politely asked to pull over and grant them a brief interview. These interviewers were specially trained for this task; visitors were asked to relate their impressions about their visit to the national forest. The survey was voluntary, and visitors were not asked to give us their names.

Five years ago, the US Forest

Service performed a similar survey in every forest in the Federal Forest System. We performed the survey again to update the information and look for new recreational trends and ideas. We will use the data we collected to improve forest planning and to help us be more informed about the needs of our local, mainland United States and foreign visitors.



Caribbean NF Staff interviewing visitors

It will also provide Forest Supervisor Pablo Cruz with an estimate of each year's number of visitors to the forest and what our visitors like to do while they are here.

We also need to know how satisfied they were while they visited us.

The results of the survey are being compiled; when they are completed, a report will be written. Check future newsletters for more details.

If you have any questions about this survey, you can visit the US Forest Service recreation website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/nvum>.

Thanks for your interest!