

# El Bosque Pluvial

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Fall, 2009



EL BOSQUE PLUVIAL'S FALL, 2009 ISSUE IS FILLED WITH STORIES ABOUT EL YUNQUE, AMERICA'S TROPICAL RAINFOREST AND OUR PROFESSIONAL STAFF; ENJOY!

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## El Yunque's National Public Lands Day Celebration— A Great Day in the Forest!



The El Yunque National Forest joined other national parks, forests and grasslands across America on Saturday, September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2009, to celebrate National Public Lands Day...

Adding excitement to the celebration, El Yunque's Conservation Education Staff offered visitors stimulating interactive educational activities and exhibits at various locations within the Forest.

The day's activities started early with the registration of volunteers by El Yunque Administration staff members **Delia Gomez, Elba Garcia, Ivette Martinez and Shari Pomales**, assisted by **Lucy Cruz** of the **Forest Supervisor's Office**. A briefing on the history and significance of National Public Lands Day to the nation and El Yunque, and a description of the special exhibits at El Portal was provided by Conservation Education Program Manager, **Blanca Ruiz**. Volunteers were told of the many rewarding opportunities for service in the Forest and provided with pertinent safety information. VIS Operations Leader **Victor Cuevas** described the Forest Service's "Leave no Trace" and "Pack-it-in, Pack-it-out" programs which the volunteers would be helping to implement on the Forest's Big Tree and La Mina nature trails later that day.

On this special day, Forest visitors were granted free entrance to the El Portal Rain Forest Center, where they were treated to an entertaining and instructive exhibit installed near the entrance to the Connections Pavilion on the center's upper level, describing El Yunque's water production, and management, and its importance to surrounding island communities.

"**THIRST**," a thought-provoking, bi-lingual, High-Definition video presentation covering the important subject of water conservation and describing the critical global water situation was shown throughout the day near El Portal's theater entrance...

Between 9:00 AM and 4:00 PM, at the Forest's Big Tree and La Mina Nature Trails, volunteers from adjoining communities, including 26 students from the **Estancia Montessori School** were divided into two teams led by Visitor Information Service (VIS) staff members **Victor Cuevas** and **Aurea Moragon** to present the "Leave No Trace" and "Pack-it-in, Pack-it-out", instructional interactive programs that encouraged visitors to appreciate the importance of bagging and removing (continued on page.2)

## The Forest Supervisor's Message



A lot is happening at El Yunque. As a high priority, we have been busy planning vital **American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (ARRA)** projects for the Forest. Assisted by our Southern Region headquarters we are crafting an array of projects to benefit our beloved Forest.

The task is monumental – the challenge has been to meet and solve environmental requirements in a timely fashion, since each project must be shown to be “shovel-ready.” before approval. However, by closely coordinating with our regional office we have effectively designed a number of challenging “green” projects for implementation at El Yunque. We are working hard to ensure that all these projects will be contract ready by the spring of 2010.

The projects that did not make the ARRA “cut” will be consid-

ered by our Washington Office for subsequent investment opportunities. The work is arduous but the rewards are of immense benefit, both for El Yunque and to the public.

In an effort to relieve the demands of high visitation, we are working hard to have a demonstration of our **Mass Transit System** ready by the summer of 2010. We are also hoping to be ready to implement an alternative **Intelligent Transit System (ITS)** on the PR 191 corridor during the same time period to better serve visitors on peak summer days.

Because we experienced extremely high visitation challenges this summer, I have chartered a **Forest Capacity Commission** to identify problem and define options to improve visitor access management during peak periods. The Commission is recommending a host of useful options that I hope to test during next year's spring break time period.

We constantly strive to improve care and stewardship of the Forest – however, we cannot accomplish these tasks alone. We must partner with the community if we are to successfully implement the many critical projects necessary on the Forest. To do this, we are actively establishing a “Friends of El Yunque” (“Amigos del Yunque”) group.. We hope that this new group will serve to encourage membership from all sectors of our island society to collaborate with us on El Yunque's many vital challenges and projects.

As a final note, November 30<sup>th</sup> marked the end of the 2009 hurricane season. We give thanks that we were blessed with such a mild season this year.

Until next time...

Hasta pronto,

*Pablo*

### El Yunque's National Public Lands Day Celebration— A Great Day in the Forest!

*(Continued from page 1)*

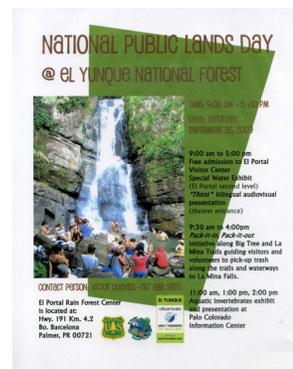
trash when visiting the Forest, leaving behind no trace of their stay...

At the Palo Colorado Interpretive Site, visitors enjoyed a **Live Aquatic Invertebrate** exhibit and lecture by **Cynthia Manfred**, an expert Forest Service nature interpreter, offered in the morning and again in the afternoon. The exhibit and lecture benefited greatly from the generosity of **Jimmy Cortes** of the

**Reef Zone Pet Shop** who provided an aquarium, and from the outstanding efforts of **Anastasio Gomez** and **Benjamin Fuentes** of the **Eco-Systems Team** who trapped an excellent cross-section of El Yunque's river wildlife for the exhibit.

**Forest Supervisor Pablo Cruz** stated “El Yunque's celebration of National Public Lands Day was a resounding success – it provided our visitors with some valuable lessons in vital forest conservation as well as a rare chance to get a close-up

views of some of the Forest's exciting aquatic wildlife – an enjoyable and educational experience for all.”



## El Yunque at the Movies !

**Q:** What do these four “blockbuster” Hollywood movies - **Captain Ron** (1992), **Goldeneye** (1995), **Che!** (2001), and **The Rum Diary** (2010) have in common?

**A:** They all have scenes that were shot in the El Yunque National Forest!



The James Bond thriller “Goldeneye” features aerial footage of the Forest’s “jungle” among other shots; the Caribbean comedy “Captain Ron” had important second unit footage (the Forest was a “stand-in” for Cuba!) shot near the El Yunque’s Nature Trails; the political drama “Che” included scenes filmed in the Tabonuco forest area and the semi-autobiographical movie “The Rum Diary” (scheduled for 2010 release) featured 1950’s vintage automobiles in scenes taken along PR 191 in the Forest’s recreational corridor.



Hundreds of movies, TV shows, MTV videos and print media have used the Forest as their “location of choice.” Why? Because the Forest is spectacularly and mysteriously beautiful, lending itself easily to many variations in script and story plots...

**Special Uses & Land Programs** “guru” **Carolyn Krupp**, ably assisted by contract employee **Sidney Salyer** are responsible for reviewing filming requests and granting permits. Carolyn works closely with the production crews, making sure that Forest regulations are observed and helping film crews with logistics and locations...

An exhibit “**Hollywood comes to El Yunque**” is planned for the near future at the El Portal Rain Forest Center. Visitors will be treated to a visual montage of movie, TV show and MTV video activities with an El Yunque flavor that have been produced over the past decades – stay tuned for details!

**Comings & Goings:** CS Team’s **Aurea Moragon** returned from a successful two weeks in the WO, sharing her talents with the FS Conservation Education folks — Eco-Team’s **Jeff Walker** accepted a promotion to Regional Archaeologist, Region 2: Jeff, Rita and the kids are now living in Portland Oregon — VIS Operation Leader **Victor Cuevas** and VIS Interpreter **Cynthia Manfred**, in November attended the **National Association for Interpretation (NAI)** annual meeting and workshop...

## Notable Notes & Quotable Quotes Around The Forest

- In 2010, the *United States Mint* will begin to issue quarter-dollar coins depicting national forests, parks and other national sites as part of the *America the Beautiful Quarters™ Program*. In 2012, the mint will honor the **El Yunque National Forest** with one of these beautiful coins – stay tuned for details!
- The *Amigos del Yunque (Friends of El Yunque)* are a non-profit, citizens group dedicated to the preservation of the El Yunque National Forest’s lands through education, outreach and stewardship. The group is just starting-up and is recruiting volunteers – for more information please contact them by e-mail at: [amigosdelyunque@gmail.com](mailto:amigosdelyunque@gmail.com) or by calling **Juan Vaquer** at **787 599 5181**.
- El Yunque has been selected from over 200 international locations to number among the exclusive “**Semi-final 28**” contenders in the *New 7 Wonders of Nature* competition! The last stage of the competition which will select the **Seven Finalists** is underway – vote for El Yunque at: <http://www.new7wonders.com>!
- Property Management Team Civil Engineer **Guillermo Aponte** on December 4th, provided an update on the closure of PR 966, stating: “I contacted the Federal Highways Contracting Office Representative (COR) for the latest status of the work. (cont. pg. 5)

## 2009 Forest Supervisor's Awards

On December 17<sup>th</sup> 2009, Forest Supervisor Pablo Cruz announced the annual El Yunque National Forest, Forest Supervisor's Awards for 2009 at an "all hands" assembly in the forecourt of the Forest's Catalina Service Center.

The award categories and the names of those exceptional individuals who were honored by the Forest Supervisor for their exemplary service are:

***Excellence in safety and Occupational Health—  
Group Award:***

Anastacio Gomez  
Benjamin Fuentes  
Orlando Carrasquillo

***Ecosystem Management  
Award:***

Felipe Cano

***Leadership Award:***

Edgardo Martinez

***Excellence in Providing  
Business Operations Support  
Award:***

Elba Garcia

***Volunteer Hosting  
Award:***

Jaime Valentin

***Partnership Award:***

Blanca Ruiz

***Customer Service — Individual  
Award:***

Luz M. Cruz

***Customer Service —  
Group Award:***

Blanca Ruiz  
Victor Cuevas  
Aurea Moragón  
Cynthia Manfred  
Frank Torres  
Edwin Velázquez

***Law Enforcement —  
Group Award:***

José Ayala  
Carmelo Ortiz  
Aymat Verdejo

***Management Initiative  
Award:***

Pedro Rios

***Heroism And Emergency  
Response Award:***

Bruce Drapeau

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## El Yunque NF-USFWS-Wal Mart-P&G; A Win/Win “Parrot Partnership” Activity!



The El Yunque National Forest joined with the US Fish & Wildlife Service to partner with Wal Mart and P&G providing educational exhibits and a narrated MS Power Point presentation on PR Parrot conservation at Wal Mart and Sam’s Club stores across the island. This was the second consecutive year of Wal Mart/P&G’s “Amigos del Yunque” promotion. I/CE Program Manager **Blanca Ruiz** collaborated with Wal Mart Special Events staff members **Ivelissa Rios Torres** and **Romy**

**Toledo** to coordinate the complex logistics and timing of exhibit and personnel placement at locations across the island. The power point presentation on Parrot conservation, narrated by EYNF staff members **Victor Cuevas, Aurea Moragon, Cynthia Manfred** and **Myrna Tirado** and USFWS staff members **Iris Rodriguez, Pablo Torres** and **Gabriel Benitez** were augmented by a continually running video on the PR Parrot. Nearby tables contained an artificial parrot nest exhibit and PR Parrot coloring books and crayons for youngsters so that they could participate in the parrot story. From all reports, the presentations were well attended and

much appreciated by store customers – and the kids enjoyed learning about the colorful PR Parrot when they used their crayons to color in the booklets provided by Wal Mart – All in all, a very successful and educational partnership effort!

Wal Mart and P&G will donate 2 cents from each P&G product sold during the promotion (up to \$10,000) to Amigos del Yunque—the proceeds will be divided equally between the El Yunque NF and the US Fish & Wildlife Service’s Parrot Recovery Program.



## Notable notes & Quotable quotes around the Forest

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As of today, they have completed stabilization work on the side of the mountain behind the retaining wall. They are placing material to raise the road approximately 5 feet above it’s grade – this change was necessary to provide stability to the wall. Very soon, if everything runs smoothly, the road will be ready for asphalt work. After asphaltting is finished, there will still be some minor tasks to complete, such as re-surfacing ditches and installing new guardrails. If everything proceeds as planned, the road should be opened before the Christmas break.

- El Yunque National Forest Recreation Manager **Jose L. Ortega** recently detailed the El Yunque’s capacity management plan for 2010: “**Forest Supervisor Pablo Cruz** has created a **Forest Capacity Commission**. The main objective of this Commission is to evaluate how the forest manages parking areas and traffic flow along PR-191 during high use seasons and holidays. The Commission will recommend ways that Forest visitors can be informed of available access and parking opportunities prior to arriving at the recreation areas. They will also look at ways the conservation ethics message is being presented to the public.

The Commission seeks to present alternatives on how to deal with issues and concerns created by excessive and uncontrolled visitation to a very ecologically sensitive tropical rain forest. This is a critical problem that puts pressure on the Forest’s natural resources and reduces the quality of the experience shared by all visitors.”



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This issue the Forest Spotlight is on the Administration Team's **Ivette Martinez** – El Yunque's Budget Officer.

Ivette was born in Cayey, a small town in the center of the island “a town of beautiful fields and a lovely climate.” It was there that she grew-up and eventually graduated from college in 1991. She lived in Caguas for awhile, eventually moving to Gurabo where she has resided for the past 17 years, although she “misses Cayey’s climate.”

In high school she was a baton twirler and leader of various school groups – she has “always loved dancing.” Ivette’s parents loved nature, transmitting that affection to her. The family frequently visited the beach and hiked through the campos (mountains) of the Carite and Toro Negro forest recreation areas, and to the El Chorro de Doña Juana waterfall. Surprisingly, the family never visited El Yunque, so when Ivette came to work for the first time “in that wonderful Forest, it was a blessing from God.”

Ivette finished her bachelor’s degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Accounting at the University of Puerto Rico, Cayey campus – after graduation while working for a private firm, she received a letter from the USDA Office of Personnel Management, offering her a job in the financial area – she “gave the job a shot” and “the rest is history!” February, 2010 will mark Ivette’s twentieth anniversary with the Forest Service!

She started as a Voucher Examiner, was quickly promoted to Financial Assistant and then to Accountant, finally attaining her present position as Budget Officer. She says: “It has been a wonderful experience- I love my job in the finance area – at the same time I feel that I’m working for an agency that accomplishes a vital task preserving natural resources for my children and future generations – what I refer to as a ‘job with a purpose!’”

A year after Ivette began working with the Forest Service, she was married to her high school sweetheart Jose – they have two “extraordinary” daughters; Viviana (age 14) and Valeria (age 11) who are also avid nature lovers and “defenders of the environment.” Ivette’s beloved mother Lydia is “a tireless fighter” whom she respects and admires.

In her spare time, Ivette does volunteer work at her daughters’ school and in her community. Mostly, she likes to spend “quality time” with her family and friends – she likes interior decorating, gardening and bicycling – she also enjoys traveling “from time to time.”

All in all – a well rounded and very accomplished lady – El Yunque is fortunate to have Ivette as an important member of our admin staff.



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