

Funds for falling forest

Environmental group wants to protect campus-sized portion of rainforests.

"The tropical rainforest is a crowded place. Covering only six per cent of the earth's surface, it is home to two-thirds of all the species of plants and animals on the planet. But the forests are disappearing at the astounding rate of 50 acres every minute! The animals and plants of the rainforests are in desperate trouble. If we do not reverse the present rate of destruction by the year 2,000, one wildlife species will become extinct every hour."

- World Wildlife Fund Canada
by Shannon Taylor

A group of University of Alberta students are asking Edmontonians to help give the rainforest a Christmas gift.

Members of the Environmental Campus Organization have launched a campaign to help save the world's dwindling tropical rainforest. Through the World Wildlife Fund of Canada's *Guardian of the Rainforest Program*, the group hopes to raise \$5,575 — enough to protect an area of rainforest the size of the university campus.

"A donation of \$25 protects one acre of rainforest through the guardian program. We are hoping to raise enough money to protect 89 hectares of land, which is exactly the size of the U of A campus," said Dean Nernberg, spokesperson for the campus organization.

The funds will protect three forest reserves in Mexico and one reserve in Guatemala. Money is used to hire local wardens and nature interpreters, and to establish demonstration farms for tropical sustainable agriculture, Nernberg added.

The idea for the project came in 1986 when the Jaguar Car Company pledged \$100,000 to establish the world's first Jaguar preserve. The

next year, WWF Canada began a program to purchase 20,000 acres of the Monteverde Nature Reserve in Costa Rica.

"Canadians were asked to donate \$25 in order to purchase one acre of rainforest on the reserve. The country responded overwhelmingly, and WWF brought in hundreds of thousands of dollars.

"Money was still pouring in to the WWF after the land was purchased, and it became evident another project was needed," Nernberg said.

The *Guardian of the Rainforest Program* was established to fulfill this need.



The program protects the rainforest rather than purchasing land. Areas had already been set aside for preservation, but nothing was being done to protect them. Illegal logging, poaching, and slash-and-burn destruction resulted.

"Now the most urgent need is to protect the areas already purchased," said Nernberg, adding the WWF Canada chose to protect reserves in Mexico and Central America because Canada will soon witness the effects of rainforest destruction in these areas.

"Central America is where our

birds winter... soon they may be without a home," Nernberg noted.

The guardian program protects the rainforest by linking the needs of the parks with the needs of the people in the surrounding areas. Officials from the WWF Canada are establishing agricultural and resource projects in buffer zones around the parks.

"If the people of the area are able to make a living through farming the area around the park, they will have no desire to encroach on the inner circle," Nernberg said, adding that iguana ranching is one established agricultural project.

Nernberg noted that there are many other ways Canadians can show their support for the rainforest.

"You can contact federal Finance Minister Michael Wilson, and condemn Canada's support of development projects which are environmentally unsustainable. Our tax dollars are being spent on developments like the destructive highway projects in South America which allow people to infiltrate the forest," he said.

Nernberg also urges Canadians to write External Affairs Minister Joe Clark, and ask him to nullify financial debts from Latin America.

"In most Latin American countries it is the debt burdens which push them into get rich quick projects at the expense of the rainforest... But the debts are so high, the Amazon will be destroyed before they can pay back a small portion of what they owe.

"If we can help release the financial pressure, the governments wouldn't undertake environmentally unsustainable projects," Nernberg said.

Jump into hot water for Nicaragua

by Lisa Hall

The U of A's FM 88 radio station has teamed up with an Edmonton organization to bring awareness to the problems of Nicaragua.

Tools for Peace is an organization which supports Central American countries. The group is holding a hot tub party this Friday, with proceeds from the party going to help Nicaragua.

FM 88's News and Public Affairs Director, Amy Santoro, decided to help promote the event because of her department's own interest in Nicaraguan problems.

"The war is not over," stressed Santoro. "There is still lots of work to do."

The idea of a hot tub party may seem superficial, but there are justifications for choosing this method to promote Tools for Peace. "While we're sitting there, all comfortable, we have to realize that there are people in other countries who aren't doing so well," said Santoro.

In fact, the hot tub will be a minor part of the event. "It's an opportunity to drop by the Tools for Peace office and talk to the volunteers and find out more about the situa-

tion in Nicaragua," said Santoro.

There will also be Latin American musicians on hand, as well as visitors from Central American countries to tell about life in their countries.

"There are many misconceptions about Central America," said Santoro, who feels that the mainstream

media often doesn't give complete facts.

In addition to promoting this event on FM 88, Santoro also plans to work with Tools for Peace in the future. One of FM 88's public affairs shows, *Uncle Sam's Backyard*, is an hour program devoted to Central American issues.

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