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GM's Money Trees



— Photos: Nicolas Villaume

In Brazil, people with some of the world's smallest carbon footprints are being displaced—so their forests can become offsets for SUVs.

— By Mark Schapiro

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November/December 2009 Issue

I am standing in the shadow of General Motors' \$1 tree. It's a native guaricica, with pale white bark and a spreading crown that looms about 40 feet above my head. Hanging from its trunk is a small plaque that identifies it as tree No. 129. I've come here, to the verdant chaos of Brazil's Atlantic forest, to understand the far-reaching and politically explosive controversies taking shape in diplomatic corridors thousands of miles away over the fate of trees like this one.

No. 129 stands in the heart of the Cachoeira reserve in the state of Paraná—one of the last slivers of a forest that once blanketed much of the country's southeastern coast. Just 7 percent of the Atlantic forest remains, but it is still one of the Earth's richest centers of biodiversity, home to a wealth of plants and creatures comparable to the Amazon's. On the way here, our group—led by Ricardo Miranda de Brites and his team of forestry experts from the Brazilian conservation group Society for Wildlife Research and Environmental Education (SPVS)—walked past clusters of yellow-and-white orchids, stepped over the footprints of an ocelot, kept an eye out for the endangered golden lion tamarin, and were bitten by, it seems, every one of the thousands of species of insects native to the area.

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But our journey is not focused on the rare creatures in the forest. It's about the forest itself—the trees that are our partners in respiration, inhaling carbon dioxide, exhaling oxygen, and storing the carbon in their trunks and leaves. That simple process makes them one of Earth's most potent bulwarks against climate change (a.k.a. a "carbon sink"); but when they are cut and burned, all that stored carbon is released into the atmosphere. Already, some 32 million acres of tropical rainforest are destroyed each year, an amount of land equivalent to the state of Mississippi's; deforestation, according to the United Nations, is responsible for roughly one-fifth of all greenhouse gas emissions.

What will it cost to keep those trees standing? And who's going to pay for it? The challenge of assigning precise values to an increasingly rare commodity—wild trees—and indeed the question of whether they are a commodity at all, is one of the most hotly contested in the climate world.

IT WAS AN unusual deal that landed tree No. 129 at the center of the debate. Between 2000 and 2002, the US-based [Nature Conservancy](#) struck an alliance with three of the planet's leading carbon emitters: General Motors, [Chevron](#), and [American Electric Power](#). Together the corporations gave the environmental group \$18 million to purchase 50,000 acres of Brazilian Atlantic forest, much of which had been degraded by grazing. Three reserves were created: Serra do Itaquí, financed with \$5 million from AEP; Morro da Mina, paid for with \$3 million from Chevron; and Cachoeira, underwritten by \$10 million from GM. (GM's role in the project survived the company's bankruptcy, which means that No. 129 is now partially owned by you and me.) SVPS was brought in to manage the reserves, which together form one contiguous forest known as the [Guaraqueçaba Environmental Protection Area](#). You'll see Guaraqueçaba promoted on the Nature Conservancy's website as an example of corporate partnerships that make "an invaluable contribution to the preservation of the planet's biodiversity." What you won't see is what the companies get out of the deal: the potentially lucrative rights to the carbon sequestered in the trees.

At tree No. 129, de Brites takes out a tape measure and unspools it around the trunk. We're at one of the 190 carbon dioxide measuring stations—each a group of trees with numbered plaques—scattered around the Guaraqueçaba forest. Documenting the bulk of the reserve's trees is an ongoing enterprise, like tracking tagged whales.

"We measure the biomass of these trees and their carbon sequestration," de Brites says as a ranger picks up the other end of the tape measure and writes down No. 129's stats. It's 3 feet in diameter and about 45 feet tall. He estimates the carbon it contains at 95 kilograms—just under one-tenth of a ton. At \$10 a ton, the upper end of the range at which carbon offsets trade in the US, No. 129 is worth about \$1. Scale up to the two to three tons of carbon per acre that de Brites estimates across the 50,000-acre reserve, and the potential payoff, in addition to the public relations value, comes into focus.

The trees in the Cachoeira reserve could never offset even a fraction of GM's total carbon footprint—a single [Hummer H2](#) (which the company started producing the same year it signed on to the Guaraqueçaba project) would require about 50 trees to offset. But the Nature Conservancy and its partners aimed to use the Brazilian reserves as a test case for preserving forests via corporate carbon credits. "The investors wanted to be pioneers in the carbon-sink field," de Brites explains. "They had in mind to start working on this before other companies."

All three companies, as it happens, had aggressively lobbied the Clinton administration against signing the 1997 Kyoto climate accord and stayed mum when President Bush withdrew from it. But they hedged their bets, figuring that the Brazilian forests could be turned into offsets to sell in places (like Europe) where Kyoto's emission limits did *apply*, or could be held in reserve in case the US ever established its own limits.

By the time the companies were ready to begin preparing their credits for sale, however, the UN had refused to allow "avoided deforestation" projects—those that buy forestland and then promise not to cut the trees—as an offset for industries seeking to buy their way out of emission limits. Credits generated from projects like Guaraqueçaba were excluded from the international carbon market launched by Kyoto, a market that now accounts for more than \$126 billion in offset transactions. The offsets could be sold, however, in the United States, where the \$700 million domestic carbon offset market is unregulated (and where prices are generally half those of Kyoto-regulated offsets).

Manyu Chang, a forest scientist who is the coordinator for climate policy for the state of Paraná, explained the problem with avoided-deforestation credits to me at her office in the state capital of Curitiba. For starters, she said, trees—living beings, after all—are far less predictable than, say, windmills. They are subject to the vagaries of fires and disease, both of which are increasing due to climate change. Each species absorbs carbon at different rates depending on factors like the altitude, soil, and weather. Then there's the problem of "leakage"—when deforestation simply shifts from protected zones to unprotected ones, creating no overall emissions reduction. And finally, the UN did not want to open the door to a perverse sort of extortion: A country could threaten to open its lands to logging unless it was paid to not do so.

More fundamentally, Chang notes, when companies create reserves on already forested lands, their contribution to the fight against climate change is limited: "Do they get the credit for simply enhancing what was there already?" José Miguez, one of Brazil's top climate officials, told me that during the Kyoto talks his government opposed using its forests to enable northern industries to pollute more. "The forest is there," he said. "You can't guarantee it will absorb extra carbon. The General Motors plan gives a false image to the public in the United States. For us, they are pretending to combat climate change."

THERE IS ANOTHER vexing question inherent in preserving forests: What happens to the people who use the land? Efforts to protect biodiversity in the dwindling wildlands of the world have increasingly run into a discomfiting tension between the impulse toward absolute preservation and the needs of people—many of them indigenous—who have lived sustainably in forestlands for decades or centuries. Such tensions are playing out in the new economics of carbon offsets.

With a preserve designed in large part to safeguard stored carbon, a new set of imperatives comes into play. Turning trees into carbon credits requires knowing how to extrapolate from carbon measurements, like the ones of tree No. 129, to determine a forest's potential as a carbon sink. It requires knowing as precisely as possible how many trees there are and of what size—which means minimizing the unpredictable activities of human beings, as small scale as they might be.

For many generations, the Guaraqueçaba forest was home to the Guarani Indians, but their dominion waned as the Brazilian government encouraged subsistence farmers to settle and clear the land. Today the two populations coexist, living alongside the reserves or in communities nearby and relying on what remains of the forest for everything from food to building materials. There are more than a dozen villages around the three reserves, linked by dirt roads and river tributaries traveled by canoe. Most are home

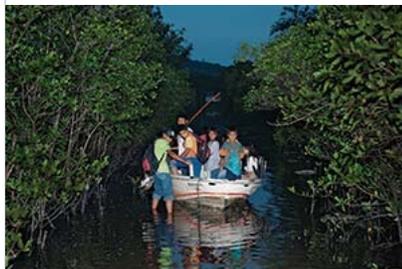


Villagers like Jonas de Souza can no longer hunt in the forest they've used for generations.

to just a few dozen people living in structures of wood and reeds. Jonas de Souza is a 33-year-old farmer who grew up a quarter of a mile from the forest that is now part of the GM-funded Cachoeira reserve. His family grows bananas, cocoa, and coffee on a small plot. He remembers hunting for small prey—roast paca, a large rodent, is a local delicacy—and collecting seeds and hearts of palm. But now, signs have gone up at the edge of the forest: No hunting, fishing, or removal of vegetation. A state police force, the Força Verde, or Green Police, patrols the three reserves, as well as a larger state-sanctioned preservation area, to enforce the restrictions.

"Now," says de Souza, "I don't have the right to go out and do what I used to do when I was 12, 14, 15 years old. I'd grab my fishing rod and get a fish to bring to my family or to feed myself. You don't have the right to walk into the forest to go and cut a heart of palm to eat. I'll get arrested and I'll be called a thief."

De Souza says he's found numerous relics of the Guarani—pipes, an axe, pottery, and burial items. The forest is valuable today, he notes, because his community and those who were here before them have taken good care of it. "We have been here, and still the forests haven't disappeared. Still the rivers aren't contaminated. Still the biodiversity isn't extinct."



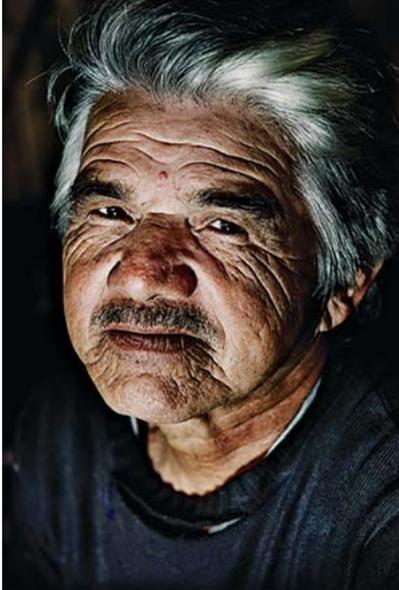
Guarani children on their way home from school.

One of the goals of the Green Police is to prevent large-scale poaching, particularly of the endangered and highly valuable hearts of palm, as well as exotic primates and birds. Yet officers cited few arrests of individuals linked to major logging, palmito, or wildlife-smuggling enterprises when I joined them on patrol. Many of their enforcement efforts have focused on local people cutting a single palm for its succulent heart—or collecting wood to build their homes. "They're afraid of us," said Captain Lestechen,

a patrol leader, as a group of young boys sitting on a bench eating a heart of palm quickly scattered at the

approach of the Força Verde jeep.

Visiting the villages without the Força in tow, I heard numerous stories of people being harassed, arrested, and shot at while looking for food, wood, or reeds. Antonio Alves, a 35-year-old farmer and carpenter—we spoke as he carved a 15-foot log canoe—said he was arrested this year for chopping down a tree to fix his mother's home in Quara Quara.



It's a stretch to call Quara Quara a village:



Antonio Alves (above; his father-in-law, Valderica Dutra, is at left) had to leave his village near GM's preserve because he can no longer hunt and gather plants in the forest.

Quara Quara a village: It's a cluster of five cabins perched at the end of a small, silted waterway. The only way in is by canoe. Three of the homes have been abandoned—the residents left, Alves said, because they could no longer hunt and gather food in the forest. After his arrest, Alves spent 11 days in jail in Antonina, a one-hour canoe ride away. The lawyer defending him at trial, pro bono, was the town's

mayor, Carlos Machado. Sitting in his expansive office in the town's colonial-era city hall, Machado told me that he's represented a string of people like Alves, villagers hauled into court on charges of violating the strict prohibitions in the reserves.

"I know he didn't go cut that tree down to speculate on the wood," Machado said. "It's one thing, the wood seller who is destroying [the forest]—this is very different from a *caboclo* [farmer] who cuts down a tree to build a fence." These distinctions, he said, have been missing from the policies created by the reserves and enforced by the Força Verde (whose officers have received training from SPVS, the Nature Conservancy's Brazilian partner). Machado has noticed a stream of migrants from the backwoods to his town, which is buckling under the strain. "Antonina is a small town that has few resources for generating income, few possibilities for people who come from the rural zone without skills and without the defenses to live in the urban environment. They stay in the outskirts of town, in the mangrove swamps, in irregular, inhospitable situations. It creates a lot of social problems for us...Through those conservation projects, they created a poverty belt around our town." The migrants also move west to Curitiba, said Machado, where they're often steered into prostitution or the drug trade.

By excluding villagers from the forests, says Jutta Kill, a researcher with the [Forests and the European Union Resource Network](#) who has spent months interviewing locals about the project, the reserves are pulling out the communities' lifeline. "In this area," she says, "everyone is cash poor but no one goes hungry. If you take the forest away, you take away everything. The preservation projects here are designed to generate offsets for the largest polluters, and they're doing it by cutting off people from the land." Few of the people here have motors on their boats, she notes; even fewer own cars. People with some of the smallest carbon footprints on Earth are being displaced by companies with some of the biggest.

Back in Curitiba, Chang, the state forestry expert, told me that the conservation groups were trying to create a "zero disturbance" environment in their forests. "Maybe that's a little obsolete," she said. "Maybe you [should] have 90 percent conservation, not 100 percent. That way you could include the community of people who live there." But that could undermine a system based on assigning a stable, reliable, and tradable value to a living ecosystem.

"The carbon idea is not really tangible to people in the community," Miguel Calmon, the Nature Conservancy's director of forests and climate in Latin America, acknowledges. Calmon says the conservation groups initially sponsored training programs for local community members in alternate sources of income—

cultivating honeybees, organic bananas, local crafts—but the money ran out. Now, he says, the rules are clear: "You can't go into these private reserves. That land is not their land anyway. If you used to go [into the forest] from your house across the road, now you can't. That land is already owned."

The supply of forests for offsetting pollution in developed countries is, potentially, almost infinite. There are an estimated 90 billion tons of carbon in Brazil's forests alone, and billions of tons more are sequestered in Indonesia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, and other nations with substantial tropical forests, which are considered the most vulnerable to deforestation. The world has a major stake in keeping all that carbon where it is. The question now being debated in Washington and Copenhagen is whether the fate of the forests—and their people—will rest on the ability of industries to pay for preserving distant trees rather than reducing emissions closer to home.

Mark Schapiro is editorial director for the Center for Investigative Reporting.



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COMMENTS



1 question, 1 comment

Submitted by [Sarah Terry-Cobo](#) on Wed Nov. 4, 2009 2:27 AM PST.

Great article, Mark. Can you clarify one thing? You wrote one Hummer 2 "would require about 50 trees to offset" but do you mean for the production of a Hummer? Or 50 trees would offset the amount of carbon burned by all the gas it would use for the entire time it is on the road? Or it would take 50 trees to offset the carbon burned by the amount of gas an H2 uses in a month?

I appreciate the fact you pointed out the "perverse extortion" possibility of avoided deforestation projects. Ecuador is essentially threatening the same thing with the <http://www.yasuni-itt.gov.ec/> Yasuni-ITT preservation proposal: the rest of the world pays them \$350 million/year over a decade, or else they will drill for oil in the biodiverse rainforest where indigenous people live.

Thank you for opening the door to a very complex and difficult conversation we must have about how to deal with global climate change.



50 trees per year.

Submitted by [Ben Buchwalter](#) on Wed Nov. 4, 2009 12:01 PM PST.

Thank you for your comment, Sarah. As the fact-checker for this piece, I can explain our methods of coming up with the approximate figure of 50 trees to offset the CO2 emitted by a Hummer H2. The number does not take into account the CO2 emissions associated with production of the H2. It refers to the number of trees necessary to offset the CO2 produced by a Hummer H2 on the road per year, assuming that it drives an average of 1,000 miles per month. It's not an exact science, but useful for the sake of illustration.



Environmentalism/carbon trading/etc.

Submitted by [GarySeven](#) on Wed Nov. 4, 2009 7:24 AM PST.

Eventually, what's going to happen is, there will be a REAL oil shortage, and all the overseas companies that've really been doing their homework on automotive efficiency design will excel, and, GM, well, it's GM, the bank that also makes cars. GMAC was whining about not having enough money again, or something.

Klaatu marachas necktie



Environmentalism and Human Rights

Submitted by [Adam Baz \(not verified\)](#) on Fri Nov. 6, 2009 4:58 AM PST.

Thank you so much for this reporting Mark. I just heard your piece on Democracy Now. I am interested in this somewhat prevalent conflict– the tension between environmentalism (noble efforts to protect and preserve biodiversity in wild areas) and human rights (the needs of local communities whose livelihoods necessitate access to, and use of, these areas. Or the desire among local communities to use such land for other purposes, particularly ones that would expand local economies, create more jobs, etc.). Do you know of any books, or substantial investigations, that deal with this basic conflict of interest? Recommended readings? Thank you again for you work!



Thanks for an inspiring

Submitted by [Monica \(not verified\)](#) on Fri Nov. 6, 2009 10:20 PM PST.

Thanks for an inspiring post. Forest preservation became the concern of most concerned citizen as a way to fight for the climate change. We owe a lot from our environment, in return proper protection must be rendered. Did you know that climate change have negative effects not just on the environment but also to the community and economy? Should we allow this aspect to be at stake because of our negligence? We are all responsible for a sustainable environment; anyway if we became successful with this campaign we will all be benefited by this. It may be worth to have some [payday loans](#) to have a continued support toward this global campaign.



paying for environmental services

Submitted by [Laura88888 \(not verified\)](#) on Sun Nov. 8, 2009 1:59 PM PST.

tagged as:

Why shouldn't we pay Ecuador to preserve their natural forest? Dont we benefit from that preservation? Why should we ask them to put resources into preservation, and avoid other kinds of economic development in the area that might conflict with preservation, without paying them? While, at least in America, we go along happily using our vast reserves of land however we please to continue to grow our already well developed economy? (and at the same time, refuse entry to most impoverished Ecuadorians who would be happy to leave the rainforest alone for a chance at a US income?)

In addition, its not like Ecuador could simply hold the world hostage. Ecuador is dependent on foreign trade and foreign aid, just as nearly every country in the world is. We have a few bargaining chips of our own to play. What is actually happening there is that people on both sides are attempting to grapple with the value of environmental services, figure out what they are really worth, and then pay a fair price for getting them. Not a bad system,

really, since it could potentially benefit the local people as well as the world at large.



Follow the money?

Submitted by [s_golding](#) on Mon Nov. 9, 2009 10:02 PM PST.

Mark - could you tell us from whom the 50,000 acres were purchased (as it was not the people actually living off the forest), and why a project yielding \$1.5 million worth of carbon credits was purchased for \$18 million? (The worth is derived from the article's figures: 50,000 acres; 2 to 3 tons per acre; \$10 per ton.) You also neglected to cover these topics in your subsequent interview on Democracy Now! on the fifth of November.

Thanks!

Sam Golding



Living on the Land

Submitted by [Ben Buchwalter](#) on Wed Nov. 18, 2009 6:08 PM PST.

Thanks for your comment, Sam. As I mentioned above, I fact-checked this piece and can answer your question. The land was purchased from the Brazilian government, which established the nature reserve in the mid-1980s. The US-based Nature Conservancy, in a partnership with SPVS, secured \$18 million from General Motors, AEP and Chevron to buy the land and conserve it. Though people lived on the land before this, they did not own it. These 50,000 acres were bought for more than today's worth of the carbon credits for a few reasons. First, Nature Conservancy bought the land, not just the carbon credits it contained. Second, the partnership was banking on hopes that the worth of carbon credits will shoot through the roof if cap and trade passes and these transactions become more common. The project also presents a clear PR benefit for the corporations. I hope this helps.



can these be sold over and over??

Submitted by *Anonymous (not verified)* on Thu Jan. 21, 2010 2:24 AM PST.

I own some acres of trees, bought over a lifetime to leave alone, and more acres of once-and-future forest, a restoration project. Recently I was offered \$3000 per acre to sell carbon credits (for 'a century or in perpetuity') on the coastal Washington big trees, to leave them alone as I'd done all along. No way, I figure I already used up that carbon credit just living sixty years.

What I can't figure out is--say someone gets paid that kind of money. They contract to leave the property alone, fine. Now whoever bought those credits has -- what? A piece of paper saying X tons of carbon credit. And they're using fossil fuel every day. How does that ever get tied up instead of just sold over and over to people who can each claim when they need to show a carbon credit that they have one, see, here -- then sell it after the accountants leave and next year say, well, we used that up, so we don't have it any more.

And what happens later when the laws get fiddled and someone comes along to my niece or nephew with that piece of paper and says, see, I own the rights to the carbon in those trees, so I have the right to give you money instead and take them. Isn't selling any kind of vague 'property right' to trees just potentially putting them in jeopardy later because that can get redefined?

I figure the trees I bought 35 years ago already paid their dues and -- if I set up a trust fund for them -- they own themselves now and have the right in perpetuity to go on producing woodpeckers and elk and the rest of what makes it a biologically diverse wildland. Show me a way, I wish there were one.

I don't get it. I really don't get it.



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Remove Carbon Offsets

Submitted by [newschool](#) on Tue Nov. 10, 2009 1:00 PM PST.

tagged as:

This is a great article. We should eliminate carbon offsets altogether. A carbon tax would have a direct and immediate impact, and it would be less prone to manipulation.



Complex story of carbon credits

Submitted by *Anonymous (not verified)* on Fri Nov. 13, 2009 11:08 PM PST.

I have just reviewed the Frontline version and now the Mother Jones version. This set of articles leaves a lot to be desired. For example the question asked by Sam Golding really needs to be addressed -- why would companies pay out \$18 million for such a pittance of carbon credit? In part the answer is, there is a lot more than 2 to 3 tons of carbon per acre of tropical forest. A 90 year old pine plantation in the southeastern USA contains about 100 metric tons of carbon per acre (see <http://www.epa.gov/sequestration/faq.html>) and a Caltech study described here <http://news.mongabay.com/2007/0508-amazon.html> mentions storage of 120 to 160 tons of carbon per acre in the Amazon. How Mother Jones (and Frontline too?) could let such an extreme error slip by its fact checkers is beyond me. Maybe they should pull these articles and double check all the other facts too!

The implication that GM and other firms are seeing this all as a kind of clever investment, rather than an effort to address their own emissions, is also rather skimpily defended.

There are many good issues raised by these articles, especially about the use of a "carbon forest" by locals (more could surely be permitted than is described here), but the article is marred by errors and omissions of fact.



The amount you can cut oil

Submitted by [fete des peres](#) (not verified) on Sat Nov. 14, 2009 4:29 AM PST.

The amount you can cut oil consumption by going vegetarian is not as much as you would like others to believe when you consider the amount of oil used to plant, harvest, process, refrigerate, store and ship veges from one hemisphere to the other due to growing seasons to to areas where they just can not be produced. The only sad part is that it shows it is not

just the American government that is more and more composed of paid corporate employees dedicated only to protecting and increasing corporate profits with fewer and fewer elected public servants who actually work for the public good and that does include insuring a viable planet to live on but all the governments of the world are becoming the serfs of corporate greed.



Call me naive, but

Submitted by Anonymous (not verified) on Thu Nov. 19, 2009 3:01 PM PST.

Call me naive, but seriously, does anyone think these corporate giants are investing in these places because it's good for the environment? Corporations always look at the bottom line, what's in it for them, how can they profit from such an investment. As stated in the article,

when companies create reserves on already forested lands, their contribution to the fight against climate change is limited: "Do they get the credit for simply enhancing what was there already? "The forest is there," he said. "You can't guarantee it will absorb extra carbon

All of this reeks of a way for the rich to get richer, while appearing to help the environment. The creation of carbon offsets is another example of a false commodity created for the purpose of generating income. Sounds like a new version of credit default swaps.



GM

Submitted by Anonymous (not verified) on Fri Nov. 20, 2009 8:05 AM PST.

As you said, GM is only interested in the bottom line--profit for stockholders. GM never cared about the damage their emissions had been doing for many years, but we are to believe that all of a sudden, they care? Not!



GM \$10 million for rain forest

Submitted by Anonymous (not verified) on Fri Nov. 20, 2009 7:59 AM PST.

OK, GM went bankrupt, took away some health benefits from retirees, lowered the hourly wage to \$14 for new hires with limited benefits, put hundreds of thousands out of work by closing dealerships, etc., but had \$10 million to purchase trees in the rainforest?!?!?!? Is GM going into the drug business? It is much more lucrative than building cars.



And to think, these people

Submitted by Anonymous (not verified) on Fri Nov. 20, 2009 10:51 PM PST.

And to think, these people might be driven from this paradise over a scam!

http://www.americanthinker.com/blog/2009/11/scientific_scandal_appears_t...



Indigenous Setaside

Submitted by InvestWisely (not verified) on Sat Nov. 21, 2009 7:07 AM PST.

The expenditure of the \$18,000,000 investment through the Nature Conservancy also begs the question of efficiency. From the Charitynavigator website I glean: "Stephanie K. Meeks Acting President, CEO, COO \$320,407 0.03% " as an annual salary. A setaside for indigenous people is a worthwhile pursuit which surely should and could be squeezed out of this funding process. In all fairness to Ms. Meeks I do not know how much of her \$320K salary goes to charitable funding.



What is the US really doing

Submitted by Josh Fulton (not verified) on Sun Nov. 22, 2009 7:34 AM PST.

What is the US really doing with Iran's "frozen" assets?

<http://joshfulton.blogspot.com/2009/11/what-is-us-doing-with-irans-froze...>



GM, etc should "Give Forests ..

Submitted by Keedo on Mon Nov. 23, 2009 7:11 AM PST.

Back To Local People To Save Them - So concludes a study that's tracked the fate of 80

forests worldwide over 15 years" www.newscientist.com/article/dn17937-give-forests-back-to-local-people-t...

Exactly why the Nobel jury chose Elinor Ostrom this year: "Her work challenged the conventional wisdom that common property is poorly managed and should be either regulated by central authorities or privatised, the jury said .. "If we want to halt the degradation of our natural environment and prevent a repetition of the many collapses of natural-resource stocks experienced in the past, we should learn from the successes and failures of common-property regimes. Ostrom's work teaches us novel lessons about the deep mechanisms that sustain cooperation in human societies .. She conducted numerous studies of user-managed fish stocks, pastures, woods, lakes and groundwater basins, and concluded that the outcomes are "more often than not, better than predicted by standard theories," the jury explained. US Duo Wins Nobel
www.commondreams.org/headline/2009/10/12-1

Money never was real wealth. Healthy, biodiverse provedince, now and in the future, is.



The Most Inconvenient Truth of All

Submitted by [survival](#) on Mon Nov. 23, 2009 10:40 AM PST.

Survival's new report 'The Most Inconvenient Truth of All: Climate Change and Indigenous People' looks at how climate change and measures to stop climate change will potentially hit indigenous peoples harder than anyone else.

Read more:

<http://www.survivalinternational.org/news/5273>

Survival International helps tribal peoples defend their lives, protect their lands and determine their own futures.

<http://www.survivalinternational.org>



Laughable

Submitted by Anonymous (not verified) on Tue Nov. 24, 2009 9:48 AM PST.

tagged as:

You liberals basically forced GM to buy these stupid carbon credits (thanks AL Gore, who by the way made millions out of the fear he drove in his movie), and then now bash them because you know they buy rainforest. I love how there is no way GM is the only one doing this, like I said Al Gore owns a large stake in carbon offset companies.

Doesn't this just show that no one should buy carbon credits, that they are a scam, shouldn't that be the point, not that GM is a big bad American bully? Get off your high horse liberals



why is it you believe

Submitted by Anonymous (not verified) on Tue Nov. 24, 2009 9:34 PM PST.

why is it you believe liberals are such fans of carbon credits...this article demonstrates precisely why we are not...carbon trading is a concept that corporations and economists have come up with to avoid any real change in carbon emissions (companies like GM)...and unfortunately a compromise that will fail in it's goals.

We went through similar baloney years ago with preservation of wetlands and "wetland development"....preservation is what us high horse liberals wanted, wetland "development" is what the corporations came up, i.e., for every wetland destroyed they would build another...a miserable failure of course, but the only reachable compromise at the time.

Al Gore has been investing his money in companies that develop energy saving technologies because we are finally moving forward after years of stalling by the Bush admin a sound investment I'd say and much more plausible than the grand

conspiracy theories presented by conservative news sites you implicitly refer to.



I assume everyone looked at

Submitted by Anonymous (not verified) on Tue Nov. 24, 2009 1:30 PM PST.

I assume everyone looked at the piece in the London Telegraph on the climate change scandal. Its getting tons of hits as its the lead story on Drudge. A hacker broke into the lead university who everything about climate change is based. The emails from the researchers flat out say in their own words how phoney this scam is. Just another case of the powers to be creating a crisis out of thin air and then they offer the solution, ie more taxes. You people fall for it every time. Here's the story.

<http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/jamesdelingpole/100017393/climategate-...>



A conservative blogger at a

Submitted by Anonymous (not verified) on Tue Nov. 24, 2009 8:31 PM PST.

A conservative blogger at a conservative paper crying "anthropogenic global warming conspiracy" without citing any actual documents or emails to support his claims...nice citation dude, must be true.



carbon and trees

Submitted by Anonymous (not verified) on Mon Nov. 30, 2009 4:55 PM PST.

Correct me if I'm wrong: how can conserving a mature forest (i.e. a forest that attained its natural equilibrium; which is the case for tropical forests in general) trap any carbon? A forest in natural equilibrium does not grow as a whole in absolute terms; for new trees to grow, older trees must fall and so on because space is limited (i.e. the land is at its maximum usage). Now, wouldn't it be much smarter to sell carbon credits to polluters to plant new forest (one that will actually catch a lot of CO2 as it grows)? Seen this way, (controlled) logging wouldn't be a problem but rather a solution, if for each tree cut a new one would be planted (assuming that industrial logging of rain forest is not meant to produce fire wood).



Just so you know...

Submitted by Ken (not verified) on Tue Dec. 1, 2009 10:09 PM PST.

Just so you guys know, Trees aren't much in the way of carbon sinks. Sure, they "inhale" Carbon dioxide and "exhale" oxygen, but that is only during the time when they have leaves. They have to process all of the glucose they make, and how do they do this? Simple: they "inhale" oxygen, expose it to the glucose, and get energy and Carbon dioxide back out of the glucose. Thus, all of the carbon they put into their cells is not from the air, it's from nutrients in the ground. "Carbon sinks" don't make up for anything, because they don't really aid the carbon pollution at all. If you doubt me, go take a look at a seasonal Carbon dioxide measuring; you'll notice that carbon amounts decline in the summer and rise dramatically during the winter. The only plant that actually takes Carbon dioxide and basically converts it into oxygen is phytoplankton.



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Submitted by [aizi1220](#) on Wed Dec. 2, 2009 12:18 AM PST.

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The BIG carbon LIE.

Submitted by John L. (not verified) on Fri Dec. 4, 2009 7:35 AM PST.

No mention of Climategate here. When Nobel laureate scientists have been shown to be

liars, the whole house of cards comes tumbling down.

Believing in lies make you a fool or a fanatic at best.

Vote Libertarian.



plant trees, plant trees, plant trees

Submitted by Anonymous (not verified) on Mon Dec. 7, 2009 12:10 PM PST.

tagged as:

From Ken 3 posts up: "all of the carbon they put into their cells is not from the air, it's from nutrients in the ground".

Where did you learn that? I'm not a botanist, but you are plainly wrong. Nutrients in the ground containing carbon, I don't see what you refer to. Plant roots only absorb from the ground water and mineralised stuff, i.e. very simple molecules and mineral salts, but not any organic (i.e. containing carbon) molecules. Trees bread as most living things, thus they also "inhale" oxygen; and you are right, that happens only when they have leaves, because leaves are the only parts of trees which can significantly exchange with the atmosphere.

But the most important here is that the global balance is positive in terms of O2 and negative in terms of CO2. Namely glucose, cellulose, lignin and all the components of wood, contain carbon which was taken from the atmosphere during photosynthesis (no carbon can be absorbed by the roots, remember). Now, if you have huge seasonal CO2 fluctuations, is precisely because during winter, trees do not withdraw any carbon from the atmosphere, and you have a lot of other living things in woods that do produce CO2. In the end, a tree as it grows, and it grows slowly, indeed acts as a sink of CO2. But when the tree is adult and grows even slower, it might be advantageous just to cut it and turn it into some durable products (buildings, furniture, chemicals), and plant new trees which have a higher rate of CO2 capture.



Joke

Submitted by Anonymous (not verified) on Sun Dec. 20, 2009 4:59 AM PST.

tagged as:

How about big words about climate changes when no thai is willing to stop his car, when he goes shopping here in the isaan ?

Nations like thailand should now start to reduce.

Sorry for my bad english.



Nature Conservancy's past of helping big business exploit

Submitted by Anonymous (not verified) on Sat Jan. 2, 2010 7:42 PM PST.

Hey Mark and Ban,

Great Story, thankyou. Just wanted to add some background info on the Nature Conservancy for readers...

The Nature Conservancy's practice of violating indigenous rights over in Brazil is complemented by their past of allowing Mobil Oil to drill on one of their land holdings -- the Texas City Prarie Preserve -- which cut in half the breeding habitat of the speckled grouse, a highly endangered bird.

The Washington Post did some investigative reports into this and suspect Nature Conservancy's practices back in 2004. www.sourcewatch.org has links for that and other companies -- great source for folks interested in digging up muck.

Also, quick question, does the biodiversity and amount of non-plant wildlife counted in the carbon calculations?



question about purchase of already-existing reserves?

Submitted by Chris W (not verified) on Wed Jan. 13, 2010 2:17 PM PST.

Great article. But I'm scratching my head: Per Ben Buchwalter's November 18th fact-check post, if Brazil had already established these reserves in the mid-80s, how could anyone

characterize the subsequent purchase as avoided deforestation?

Unless I'm missing something, GM et al would have to argue that the Brazilian gov't is incompetent in preserving the land themselves, and that deforestation was imminent. But if that was the case, couldn't preservation have been purchased on-the-cheap by just enlisting SVPS to manage preservation of the Brazilian gov't-owned reserve? And maybe hiring some green rent-a-cops for enforcement?



Thanks for an inspiring post.

Submitted by Anonymous (not verified) on Mon Mar. 8, 2010 2:03 PM PST.

Thanks for an inspiring post. Forest preservation became the concern of most concerned citizen as a way to fight for the climate change. We owe a lot from our environment, in return proper protection must be rendered. Did you know that climate change have negative effects not just on the environment but also to the community and economy? Should we allow this aspect to be at stake because of our negligence? We are all responsible for a sustainable environment; anyway if we became successful with this campaign we will all be benefited by this. It may be worth to have some [cash advances](#) to have a continued support toward this global campaign.



Wonderful

Submitted by [dianarobert23](#) on Sat Mar. 20, 2010 2:09 AM PDT.

Its really a wonderful article about GM money's tree. I really love reading this article .It has lots of knowledge to impart. I admire those writers who share the best of their knowledge in writing such articles. Keep up the good work and continue inspiring readers. Thank you so much.

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good

Submitted by Jany (not verified) on Fri Mar. 26, 2010 1:40 AM PDT.

The given article is quite interesting and it gave me very reliable and useful information. I like to read such valuable articles as it increase my knowledge .

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Let's save mother earth

Submitted by NITTO (not verified) on Sun Mar. 28, 2010 1:56 PM PDT.

Very informative post! Thank you for sharing it.

Looking forward for more !

[free newsletter tips](#)



Nice

Submitted by Stacy Wilson (not verified) on Mon Apr. 12, 2010 9:13 PM PDT.

Its really a wonderful post. I really appreciate your wonderful work. I really got to know many new things from your post.

[The Diet Solution Program](#)

[Colon Cleanse](#)



Carbon Footprint is really a

Submitted by Manyoka (not verified) on Tue Apr. 20, 2010 3:22 PM PDT.

Carbon Footprint is really a problem we need to worry about. Just think of the recent volcano and everything came to a halt

[how to get pregnant](#)

[This information is some of](#)



Submitted by jenny0386 (not verified) on Fri Apr. 23, 2010 11:16 PM PDT.

This information is some of the best I have found on this topic for me, I really appreciate this point of view and I've found it to be more reliable than some, I will be recommending it to others.

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