

## ELI Research in Action: Conserving Private Land in Latin America



Photo by Jay Pendergrass

The Research and Policy Program at the **Environmental Law Institute (ELI)** works with partners around the world to build legal institutions that protect the environment. We define success in two ways: developing new or improved laws and, in the process, strengthening networks of local environmental leaders ready to use them to benefit their communities. Our work to promote conservation of private lands in Latin America is a case in point.

The loss of tropical biodiversity is one of the great environmental challenges of our era. Conserving critical habitat is especially important in Latin America, where 80 percent of land is privately owned. ELI joined a team of local partners to find ways to expand the tools available to landowners to conserve private lands. According to Pedro Solano, Conservation Program Director of the Peruvian Society for Environmental Law, the partners discussed in meetings with ELI Attorney Byron Swift, “the idea of compiling existing laws and regulations for private conservation in 9 countries of Latin America and presenting case studies.”

Two years of efforts by ELI and the partners in these countries led to the first comprehensive book existing legal instruments: *Legal Tools and Incentives for Private Lands Conservation in Latin America: Building Models for Success*. Available in both English and Spanish, the book offers an in-depth examination of how voluntary instruments, such as easements and private reserve designations, have been implemented since the 1990s. Pedro Solano also credits the project for bringing together Latin American groups through workshops and for ultimately leading to the creation of the Latin American Network for Private Conservation. Here is a sample of their accomplishments:

**Costa Rican** partners prepared improved legislation for private reserves and conservation easements now before the national legislature's Commission on Environment.

**In Chile**, our partner, the National Committee for the Defense of Plants and Animals launched a network that now has more than 100 members, including individuals, NGOs, foundations, landowners, universities, and others practicing conservation on their land.

**In Ecuador**, the National Network of Private Reserves of Ecuador has developed the vision and resources to systematize each private reserve's legal status with GIS maps. A group of NGOs continues to implement private land conservation mechanisms, focusing especially on biological corridors and land purchases.

And finally, **in Peru**, the SPDA went on to develop regulations to create new legal tools, such as mechanisms that allow the designation of private concessions over state lands for conservation or ecotourism purposes. Thanks to SPDA's initiative, Peru now has 14 conservation concessions covering 422,813 hectares and 22 ecotourism concessions covering 49,673 hectares. And in 2006, the Amazonic Association for the Amazon received a 142,000-hectare area of cloud forests as a conservation concession in the San Marin province of Peru.

### Legal Tools and Incentives for Private Lands Conservation in Latin America: Building Models for Success.

*“The book was the first attempt to compile and compare the state of the art of legal framework for private conservation in Latin America. That alone helped a lot to assess ourselves, find existing gaps and think about direction.”*

—**Pedro Solano**, Conservation Program Director of the Peruvian Society for Environmental Law



Photo courtesy of Pedro Solano

*The Environmental Law Institute makes the law work for the environment. Through innovative research, practical analysis and forward-looking publications, the Institute informs and empowers policy-makers, business leaders, and environmental advocates worldwide. ELI is well-known for solving problems and designing fair, creative, and sustainable approaches to implementation.*