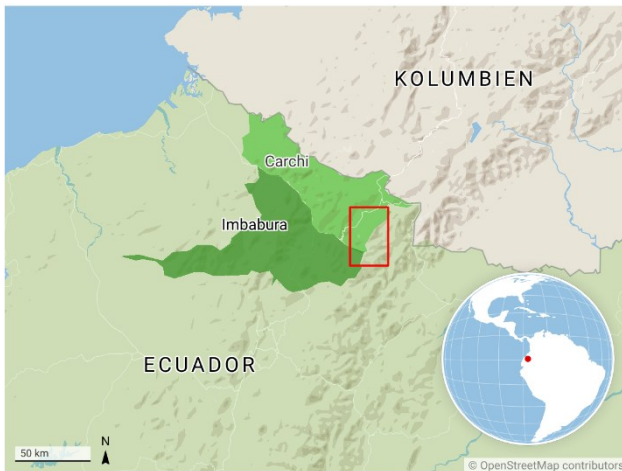




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Living Andes — Forest Conservation and Restoration for Climate, People and Nature

Northern Andes in Ecuador

The montane forest landscapes of Ecuador's northern Andes are among the most biodiverse regions on Earth and play a key role in the global climate, the country's water supply, and food security. However, deforestation, the expansion of agricultural land, and soil degradation threaten this valuable ecosystem and destroy the Andean bear's habitat. The goal of this project is to work with local communities, government agencies, and stakeholders to protect, restore, and sustainably manage the mountain forest landscape.



Reforestation



Protection & Conservation

FOREST CONSERVATION & MANAGEMENT



Reforestation: 18–37k t CO_{2e}
Conservation: 1.1–2.2m t of CO_{2e}

CARBON SEQUESTRATION



100 people with increased income

IMPROVED LIVING CONDITIONS



9,740 ha

IMPROVED
FOREST INTEGRITY

Forest Conservation and Restoration for Climate, People and Nature

Background

The project area encompasses two protected areas covering a total of 24,116 ha in the northern Andean biocorridor of Ecuador, in the transition zone to the Amazon. Approximately 68,000 people live here, relying on small-scale farming, mostly in poverty. Unsustainable agricultural practices and soil degradation are forcing smallholder farming families to constantly clear new land for crops and livestock, thereby driving deforestation. This also exacerbates conflicts with the Andean bear, which is facing a rapidly shrinking habitat. Added to this are challenging climate extremes such as droughts and floods. Against this backdrop, sustainable, nature-based solutions that benefit climate, people and nature alike are urgently needed.

Project Idea

By combining conservation and restoration measures for mountain forests, promoting sustainable, climate-adapted, and yield-enhancing agriculture, and specifically reducing human-wildlife conflicts, the project collectively strengthens climate, people and nature in the northern Andes. The project follows a landscape approach (see box).

The Landscape Approach

A landscape refers to a large, contiguous geographic area in which ecological, social, and economic systems interact with one another. In such landscapes, diverse land-use practices coexist—such as agriculture, nature conservation, forestry, and settlements. When applying the landscape approach, competing land-use demands are balanced in a way that benefits both human well-being and the environment. It is a holistic and integrated method for managing natural resources based on local needs, with the goal of promoting sustainable development, climate resilience, and biodiversity. This approach takes land-use conflicts into account while simultaneously tapping into potential for synergies and shared solutions.

Project Objectives (Outcomes)

1. Climate:
 - Reforestation of 400 ha, which is estimated to sequester an additional 18–37k t CO₂e.
 - Protection and improved management of 9,470 ha of mountain forest; estimated storage of 1.1–2.2 million tons of CO₂e.
2. People: 100 smallholder farmers have increased their income.
3. Nature:
 - Increased management efficiency (+30%) and a higher Forest Integrity Index¹ (+10%) across 9,740 ha.
 - Reduction in the rate of forest conversion to agricultural land by 10%.
 - The frequency of human-wildlife conflicts involving the Andean bear is reduced by at least 40%.

¹ A combination of land-use analysis, biodiversity monitoring, and assessments of ecosystem functions, management effectiveness, and socioeconomic factors.

Measures

For objective 1:

- Climate risk analysis to identify priority areas for conservation, restoration, and sustainable agricultural use
- Development and implementation of an action plan for reforestation

For objective 2:

- Development of nature conservation agreements in collaboration with smallholder farmers
- Conducting Farmer Field Schools for practical capacity building in sustainable agriculture

For objective 3:

- Updating and improving the existing management plan in collaboration with the protected area management
- Building the capacity of the protected area management in terms of management efficiency, climate change, and nature-based solutions
- Analyzing human-Andean bear conflict in both protected areas using the WWF's **Conflict-to-Co-existence method** and raising awareness among local stakeholders



"We are working together with governments and local groups in the Northern Andes—a key region for the climate, people, and nature. This joint effort strengthens coexistence with the Andean bear and contributes to climate protection."

Cristina Garcia, Senior Program Officer, Landscapes and Climate, WWF Ecuador.
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Project duration

2+5 years, from February 2026 to January 2032

Project costs

Total costs: CHF 800,000 + CHF 1,600,000 (TBD)

Contact

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