

Colombia Expands Chiribiquete to Become One of the Largest National Parks in South America



July 2, 2018— The Andes Amazon Fund congratulates the Government of Colombia for expanding Chiribiquete National Park by **3.7 million acres**. Now one of the largest national parks in South America, it protects **10.5 million acres** of Amazonian rainforest in southern Colombia.

“In a continent renowned for its spectacular landscapes, Chiribiquete stands out as one of the most dramatic places in the world,” said Andes Amazon Fund Program Director Enrique Ortiz.

Largely unexplored, Chiribiquete's landscape appears almost otherworldly with massive *tepuys*—table-top mountains— and domes protruding from dense rainforest. These rock formations are estimated to be **2 billion years old**. Aside from their geological significance, the *tepuys* are thought to have been sacred religious sites for indigenous peoples.

One of the **largest assemblages of cave paintings** in South America can be found within the Park, indicating the presence of humans as early as 450 A.D. **More than 20,000 paintings** have been discovered, depicting animals, plants, and scenes of ancient daily life. As of today, the Park is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site due to the cultural value of its art.

The Park is also a haven for biodiversity, hosting a record number of tropical plant and animal species. One of the **highest rates of plant diversity** in the northern Amazon can be found within the Park's lowland rainforest, while its *tepuys* contain plant species endemic to the savannas of the Guianas.

“Colombia holds many of the highest biodiversity records of any country on Earth. With the expansion of Chiribiquete, Colombia has shown that it has a conservation commitment that matches its biodiversity value,” said Andes Amazon Fund Executive Director Dr. Adrian Forsyth.

The rivers found within the Park serve as an important spawning ground for fish that later return to the Caquetá River. Many communities that live nearby depend on these fish stocks for their main source of protein. As a result, the protection of the Park's rivers will help **ensure the food security** of local people.

“Thanks to the visionary leadership of local and national leaders, Colombia is now the proud home of one of the largest national parks in South America,” said Hansjörg Wyss, who established the Wyss Foundation in 1998 and is a supporter of Andes Amazon Fund. “Colombia's decision to conserve this wild landscape as a public resource – protected for all time – is a shining example to the world in the race to save our planet's remaining natural areas.”

The Wyss Foundation has contributed and committed more than **US\$1 million** through Andes Amazon Fund to local efforts to expand the park and support its initial management.

During his presidency, President Santos has added a total of **7.3 million acres to the park**, expanding it for the first time in 2013. Under his leadership, Colombia has risen as a conservation leader in the Western Hemisphere.

“This expansion is particularly critical now, as deforestation pressure is mounting in the areas to the north and west of Chiribiquete. Providing this extra level of protection to the intact wilderness around the core of the Park will prevent its destruction as the forest is rapidly cleared by land grabbers,” said Andes Amazon Fund Project Director Megan MacDowell.

The Andes Amazon Fund applauds President Santos, Minister of Environment Luis Gilberto Murillo, Director of National Parks Julia Miranda, Fundación para la Conservación y el Desarrollo Sostenible (FCDS), and others for their work towards this outstanding achievement.

The Andes Amazon Fund is pleased to recognize the support and collaboration of the Wyss Foundation, the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, and the Bobolink Foundation in the effort to expand and consolidate conservation in the Chiribiquete region.
