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Alcoa Foundation, IUCN partner to support critical research on ecosystem restoration

PITTSBURGH, April 21, 2022—Alcoa Foundation today announced a partnership with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to investigate how ecosystem restoration projects can successfully contribute to biodiversity and community benefits under different environmental and social contexts.

Funded by a \$1.5 million Alcoa Foundation grant, the three-year project will examine the biodiversity and community benefits of existing restoration projects in Iceland and Brazil, which are diverse in landscape and legal frameworks. Led by IUCN, the work will engage research institutions in both countries to explore existing restoration approaches and impacts. Other subject matter experts from IUCN’s academic network will provide advisory support.

The knowledge gathered will be developed into a model that can be applied across geographies to increase confidence in restoration projects. The model will include a viability assessment framework focused on social and economic outcomes of restoration projects.

“There is an urgent need to tackle the degradation of ecosystems and the resulting loss of biodiversity through restoration efforts,” said Rosa García Pineiro, President of Alcoa Foundation. “This project will make a significant contribution toward finding ways to successfully achieve this and also help us realize the United Nations’ vision of living in harmony with nature.”

Land use change, such as clearing for agriculture and food production, is a leading cause of ecosystem degradation and loss of biodiversity. Restoration initiatives seeking to reverse degrading processes can equally impact people’s livelihoods and economic well-being. Tensions from land use change, however, could increase as restoration initiatives become more ambitious in scale, putting success at risk.

Dr. Tracy Farrell, Chief Executive Officer of IUCN-US has said, “This project will provide us with a greater understanding of how to best achieve ecological restoration results, with results applicable worldwide.”

Restoration of degraded ecosystems on land and in oceans is recognized as a key contributor to combating climate change and addressing global biodiversity loss. In June 2021, the United Nations launched its Decade on Ecosystem Restoration initiative that is aimed at preventing, halting and reversing degradation of ecosystems worldwide.

Signatory countries to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and its post-2020 global biodiversity framework are also set to have at least 20 percent of degraded ecosystems under restoration by 2030. At smaller scale, such as for development proposals, there is increasing use of measures to offset unavoidable impacts on biodiversity, with restoration of degraded ecosystems being one way to achieve this.

About Alcoa Foundation

Alcoa Foundation invests where Alcoa has a presence, partnering with communities to address local needs in a sustainable manner. With its nonprofit partners, Alcoa Foundation contributes to programs that protect and preserve the environment and promote equitable access to education and skills-building opportunities. For more information, visit www.alcoa.com/foundation.

About IUCN

IUCN is a membership Union composed of both government and civil society organizations. It harnesses the experience, resources and reach of its more than 1,400 Member organizations and the input of more than 18,000 experts. IUCN is the global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it. For more information, visit www.iucn.org.

About IUCN - United States

IUCN - United States is a partner organization to IUCN, incorporated in 1986 in the District of Columbia with a 501(c)(3) charitable status under U.S. law. It has been supporting IUCN, and its network of members and partners for over 25 years. IUCN-US provides financial support to both IUCN and other partner organizations with similar missions in addressing some of the world's greatest environmental challenges. www.iucnus.org

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