



INTERNATIONAL
LAND CONSERVATION
NETWORK

NEWS FROM OUR PARTNERS

In Latin America, the ILCN Ushers in a New, More Robust Network of Conservationists

Lily Robinson — ILCN Program Coordinator

January 4, 2024

In Latin America, a new network of private and civic land conservationists is blossoming with the support of the International Land Conservation Network (ILCN) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC). The project, launched by the ILCN in 2023, aims to grow the network's reach and support of an already rapidly developing community of land conservation in the region. Several months in, preliminary survey results and research into the network's viability are promising.

The project is being facilitated mainly by two ILCN contractors. Zachary Hummel, a graduate student at the University of Montana's Resource Conservation Program, and Hernán Mladinic, ILCN Regional Representative for Latin America are conducting foundational research on the region, compiling contacts, and gauging initial interest. Their work accelerates what the ILCN began on five continents, when it established its team of regional representatives in 2020.

Hummel identified several characteristics common to Latin American countries that should allow private and civic land conservation to thrive there. First, most Latin American countries have generally secure land-tenure systems, which are key for the long-term decision-making power necessary to establish privately protected areas (PPAs). States in the region also acknowledge and support PPAs under viable government arrangements. Though they are far from comprehensive, legal mechanisms, financial incentives, and other institutional infrastructure are also present to enable, complement, and improve on what a robust network of civic and private conservation organizations could bring to the region.

Throughout the network building process, the ILCN will be surveying countries to identify challenges and assets to each nation's unique legal and social framework and developing recommendations for further promoting private and civic land conservation. Some of these recommendations will be general to the region, while others will be country specific.

In October 2023, Hummel circulated a network survey to gain insight into the leading challenges Latin American conservation organizations face, the usefulness of the existing network, and to gauge interest in a more formalized network. Preliminary results from 16 respondents showed that the greatest perceived challenges for organizations were lack of financial resources and incomplete policy and legal frameworks.

Respondents highlighted several ways that the existing network was already serving them, which included sharing experiences, knowledge, and contacts; creating institutional alliances; and aiding in facilitating communication and raising awareness for conservation at an international scale. Perhaps most promising was the show of interest in participation in a more robust future network. About 69 percent of respondents indicated that they were “very interested” in participating in a more formal network. The remainder indicated a medium to high level of interest.

A smaller number of respondents (31 percent) said that they had high capacity for participating in such a network. This would mean helping with management and planning, organizing workshops and other events, and helping to grow alliances across Latin America.

Another development for the network came in December, when Hummel and Mladinic co-hosted the webinar “Opportunities and challenges for voluntary land conservation in Latin America – strengthening our network”. Conducted in Spanish with English translation, the event was the first in a series aimed at discussing the primary challenges and opportunities to building the ILCN’s Latin American network.

Next steps and ongoing work on the project include one-on-one discussions with survey respondents who expressed interest in participating in the network; in-depth interviews with TNC representatives; policy-gap analysis; growing a network-contact list; and possibly translating the survey to Portuguese to reach a wider audience, especially in Brazil.

Have news? Share updates from your organization or country by emailing ilcn@lincolninst.edu.