



THE BIODIVERSITY GROUP

focusing on life overlooked

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To Whom It May Concern:

I was recently contacted by our partner organization the Third Millennium Alliance (TMA), requesting a letter of support for their registration as a Verified Conservation Area (VCA). I have had the privilege of working closely with TMA in their Jama-Coaque Reserve on a variety of projects in coastal Ecuador since 2009, and consider it an honor to recommend their organization for the VCA initiative.

Our relationship with TMA began five years ago in the Jama-Coaque Reserve, where despite widespread deforestation in the surrounding region, there still remains intact habitat and incredible biological diversity. It is due to this biodiversity and the manner in which it is professionally managed by TMA that our organization (The Biodiversity Group) brings research and conservation expeditions to the Jama-Coaque Reserve on an annual basis. Of our broad network of partners in Ecuador, TMA has been the most successful in fulfilling its conservation mission. I would not hesitate in recommending them for the VCA registry.

In 2012, in partnership with TMA, we initiated an environmental education program for the youth of Camarones, Ecuador, TMA's host community. This outreach program is based on the use of digital cameras to transform local children into citizen scientists and conservation stewards in their own community. At the heart of this program, and a reason for its continued success, is an intimate and long-running relationship between TMA staff and local community members. On a weekly basis TMA staff and volunteers meet with community members to walk trails throughout the Jama-Coaque Reserve to search for local biodiversity. These activities, in addition to the growing employment and training of locals in the Jama-Coaque Reserve, have resulted in an extremely positive reputation for TMA in the region. Everyone who we work with on the coast, including community members, non-profits, and governments, respect TMA and are eager to collaborate with them on any project they pursue.

Our organization has seen TMA grow dramatically over the past few years. Their highly qualified staff, made up of both Ecuadorians and foreigners, in combination with their growing community outreach programs ensures that TMA will continue to grow as a major player in the conservation of coastal Ecuador. Our organization could not carry out our work in coastal Ecuador without the support of TMA. Our partnership with TMA has brought us invaluable experience as a non-profit, and ensures that both of our organizations can continue to jointly tackle the conservation crisis in coastal Ecuador. It is with great pleasure that we support TMA's proposal to have their Jama-Coaque Reserve registered as a VCA.

Sincerely,

Paul S. Hamilton, PhD
Executive Director
The Biodiversity Group