



For immediate release
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Seven-Day Countdown to WILD9 *9th World Wilderness Congress - Nov. 6-13, 2009 - Merida, Mexico*

Speaker and session agenda published **Congress highlights imperative to protect wilderness**

Boulder, CO -- In the run-up to the UN climate change meetings in Copenhagen, WILD9 published today a congress agenda reflecting its objective to assemble a diverse range of views from academia, government, private sector, science, native peoples, the arts, media and social sciences on the importance and benefits of protecting nature and related strategies and success stories.

“WILD9 will be take a significant step forward showing the world that many of the crises we face – from a warming planet to freshwater shortages to desertification – require natural solutions, and that human well-being throughout the planet requires a healthy wilderness foundation,” said Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, Conservation International’s VP for conservation policy, former environment minister of Costa Rica, and WILD9 executive committee member. “WILD9 is assembling a diverse and highly distinguished group to carry this message forward with energy and enthusiasm,” he said.

Keynote speakers who will directly address Wild9’s overriding theme -- protecting nature to mitigate climate change -- include Dr. Thomas Lovejoy of the Heinz Center; Nobel laureate Mario Molina; Rocky Mountain Institute founder Dr. Amory Lovins; and Ilarion Merculieff, Bering Sea council of elders.

Dr. Jane Goodall, along with other wildlife experts, will present cases for conserving biodiversity and wildlife habitat. One Sunday, Nov. 8, noted marine biologist Dr. Sylvia Earle will introduce Dr. Goodall, who will deliver a key-note address and launch her global Roots and Shoots program in Mexico, the first location in Latin America.

Speakers will also share discussion and best practices on valuing ecosystem services. Economist Dr Pavan Sukhdev of the Deutsche Bank will preview the results of his UNEP *The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) Report* that he will present at Copenhagen illustrating the economic benefit of protecting nature and its critical products and services.

WILD9 Chairman Dr Exequiel Ezcurra kicks off the theme of global marine wilderness, unveiling his conservation vision for Baja Sur/Gulf of California coastal lands and gulf waters.

Mexico President Calderon is provisionally slated to welcome delegates and WILD9 on Friday, Nov. 6, in keeping with his environmental commitment and his expressed interest in the issues WILD9.

WILD9 speakers will provide global assessments and strategies, but also focus on specific geographic areas threats and initiatives. A particular focus will be on Mexico as host country with sessions on water issues; announcement of the establishment of a federal network of wilderness protected areas; regional initiatives with U.S, Canada and Guatemala; and the Yucatan RAVE, a multi-media assessment of the state's ecological health. WILD9 will hear from seven environment ministers or their representatives, including Canadian minister Prentice and Mexican minister Elvira.

“Notable speakers from around the world are coming to WILD9 to share their concern and knowledge about global environmental assessments and the imperative to protect wilderness and nature. If you look over the past WWCs, since the first in 1977 in South Africa, the conservation accomplishments are numerous and significant, “ said Jaime Rojo, WILD9 executive director. “We anticipate a strong thrust forward on the conservation front as a result of WILD9.” WILD9 will review initiatives and commitments borne at prior congresses and close with a slate of new ones and a *Message from Merida*, which will include specific recommendations for the upcoming climate change conference in Copenhagen.

On the private sector side, a network of international companies, lead by Mexico-based global cement corporation CEMEX, will sign the Corporate Commitment to Wilderness (CCW) and launch the CCW Center. Panelists will discuss the imperative for the private sector to contribute to wilderness protection to benefit their mission and society, and describe case studies.

The second Native Lands and Wilderness Council will convene at WILD9 and plenary sessions include perspectives and case studies of traditional land stewardship and native people's connection to wilderness. Speakers include Brazilian chief Tashka Yawanawa. Another congress track focuses on exploration and case studies of the social benefits of wilderness in areas of reconciliation, spirituality, peace and transformation for individuals and communities.

In the tradition and spirit of all WWCs to honor the fundamental role culture plays in our relationship to and celebration of nature, and to engage the local host community, WILD9 local events abound. They include children painting life-sized ceramic jaguars to grace the streets of Merida; the Latin America premiere of Frans Lanting's multimedia production *LIFE: A Journey through Time*; multiple exhibits by luminary nature photographers; nature film screenings; traditional body painting; and events sponsored by the federal and local government.

“The goal of each WWC is -- in the words of its founder, renowned South African conservationist Dr. Ian Player -- to assure that wilderness remains a constant reality, and a source of spiritual inspiration, prosperity and fundamental physical life on planet Earth,” said Vance Martin, president of The WILD Foundation and co-chairman of WILD9. “We look forward to WILD9 taking us one step further toward that goal.”

[Register Here for WILD9!](#)

WILD9 is a partnership between The WILD Foundation and Unidos para la Conservación and relies on the support and participation of many partner organizations.

The WILD Foundation (www.wild.org) Founded in 1974, WILD is the only international organization dedicated entirely and explicitly to wilderness protection around the world. WILD works to protect the planet's last wild places and the wildlife and people who depend upon them, because wilderness areas provide essential social, spiritual, biological and economic benefits. We believe that intact wilderness areas are an essential core element of a healthy modern society.

Unidos para la Conservación (www.undiosparalaconservacion.org) Founded in 1992, Unidos is a nonprofit Mexican conservation organization that has actively promoted the concept of wilderness conservation in Mexico. Its working strategy combines the establishment of alliances with government, non-profit and corporate partners with the promotion of a conservation culture through publications and films in a search of conservation solutions through specific action.

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