

## Alvaro Ugalde (1946-2015)



Nectandra Institute lost one of its founders and inspiration on Feb. 15. We mourn Alvaro deeply and profoundly.

Alvaro Ugalde is widely recognized as one of the fathers of Costa Rica's system of national parks and protected areas. He dedicated 45 years of his life to conservation work in Costa Rica, including serving as the founding

executive director of Nectandra Institute until his retirement and president of our board of directors until passing away in February, one day before his 69th birthday.

Other than “national parks”, one of the things that Alvaro said the most was “thank you.” It did not matter if it was in response to a small gesture or a large one, something trivial or something important, Alvaro did not hold back on expressing his appreciation. This characteristic helped endear him to so many.

Alvaro's appreciative and humble nature is a common theme in many of the anecdotes and reflections shared by his family and friends. Inspirational, passionate, charismatic, sincere, “a soldier for conservation”, “a born leader”, “extremely playful, mercurial”, and courageous are only some of words used to describe him. These, together with many of his own words and images, are gathered in the special section of Nectandra Institute's website dedicated to such special person.

In his closing days, Alvaro expressed being at peace with his life's work, saying that he could die happily knowing he had done everything in his power to defend nature. He believed the rest of us also had the right to similarly conclude our lives: happily and without regrets. To earn this right, however, Alvaro urged each of us to do our part to fight to protect the natural wealth and beauty of this Planet.

To honor his spirit and legacy, Nectandra Institute pledges to continue his lifelong work — for biodiversity and for our planet. In commemoration, Board members and staff of Nectandra Institute have submitted the following tributes and anecdotes in this issue of our newsletter. Our hope is that this glimpse into Alvaro will not only help preserve and honor his memory, but also serve to teach and inspire many to continue this good fight.

— Luis Villa —

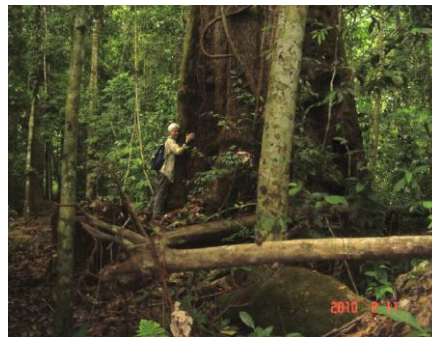
## Alvaro, Ann and the Ajo Tree

We have lost, far too soon, two of the world's remarkable people, Alvaro Ugalde and Ann Gallie, in the last 14 months. As Directors of the Nectandra Institute, Ann and Alvaro were woven together in life through their love of the forests of Costa Rica, and are woven together now as their ashes rest side by side in the roots of a giant Ajo tree in the Osa peninsula.

It was on Ann's first trip to Costa Rica that she met Alvaro, and it was in Corcovado National Park that Ann was so overwhelmed by the tumult of life in the forest, and by the majestic presence of the giant Ajo, that she burst into tears. It took Ann some time to understand what had happened, and when she did, she wrote these words to Alvaro:

*I am still trying to understand the tears, but I know the heart of it. The tears are tied up with the hope that I saw in Costa Rica, in you, that some of the planet may not be lost, and with what I finally understood about the power of action in the hands of an individual, rather than despair and incapacity. I cried with grief at all the world is losing and will yet lose, for how beautiful it is, with grief at myself for having given up. But I also understood that it was hope that allowed grief out, made it bearable. I don't yet know how much will show on the exterior, but since that moment my interior landscape has shifted and it feels a bit like the sun just rose.*

From that moment, Alvaro and Ann were soul mates. They worked together with joy on the Board of the Nectandra Institute, focused on protection of the rare and precious high montane cloud forests, and shared a deep love of the lowland forest of Corcovado. For both Ann and Alvaro the Ajo trees remained magical. On a visit to Osa in 2010, after being diagnosed with cancer, Ann made clear to her family her wishes to have some of her ashes gently dug in to the forest floor by the roots of the giant Ajo tree. To the tree, Ann gave it a hug to receive its tacit approval.



Then in 2012, much to Alvaro's delight and amazement, the Park Service dedicated a giant Ajo tree to him at Piro, on the edge of the Corcovado National Park. He, too, made clear his

wishes to have some of his ashes placed in the roots of the tree when his time came. When Ann died in January, 2014, Alvaro asked if some of her ashes could be placed in the roots of “his” tree, so that he and Ann may join hands in the fullness of time beneath the Ajo.

None of us knew that Alvaro's own tragic death was to occur so soon. Now, a part of each rests together, nestled in the giant arms of the Ajo roots. Together they will rejoin life of the forest that they so loved.

We mourn their passing, and we celebrate their lives. And we will build on their legacy of hope.

*Dougal McCreath  
President of the Board of Directors  
June 26 2015*

## **Breakfast with Alvaro**

Alvaro's home is a quintessential Costa Rican family home. It was built by his father to raise four children in the Zapote area of San José when it was still mostly coffee plantation. Eventually, it became Alvaro's own as his parents and siblings moved elsewhere. Modest in size, both inside and outside, every spare inch of the comfortable space was occupied by lush flowering plants. Alvaro loved bright colors—turquoise bathroom, bright yellow kitchen, sky blue bedroom, and green hallway. The walls were covered with exuberant artwork, historical photos and framed awards. In the tradition of most Costa Rican homes, Alvaro's house served dual purposes—as his office during off hours (or when he was in between jobs) and as his home. As Alvaro's career took off, this memorable home became the stopping point for all walks of conservationists, ranging from heads of states, to foreign dignitaries, to park employees, rangers, or even just strangers interested in his work. He received and hosted them all. I can only imagine the many historical events that took place behind those walls.

Back in the old days, when Nectandra Cloud Forest facilities were under construction, and before we had a home of our own in Costa Rica, Evelyne my spouse and I would occasionally stay with Alvaro in his home. One of the events to look forward to there was breakfast: Alvaro would take charge in his kitchen, parceling out a few chores (I often made fresh coffee, using the classic Tico “sock”). He would then prepare a pan of eggs scrambled with fresh tomatoes, served together with fresh fruit and buttered bread. We all sat and discussed current affairs in Costa Rica, punctuated by personal stories, with emphasis on conservation issues.

Often, he would move on to put the current state of affairs into the larger picture of building the national park system, and increasing the total protected areas of Costa Rica. On one fortunate occasion, Dan Janzen was invited, and turned up to engage in a lively back and forth discussion of reforestation as a part of conservation in Costa Rica. At the time, these breakfast occasions seemed only to be pleasant interludes in our schedule of other work and responsibilities. Over a longer period though, they planted the seed in Evelyne's head for the Eco-loan concept, from which grew the community watershed reforestation program that Nectandra Institute initiated in 2006 when Alvaro became our CEO after his retirement from his federal position as director of the Osa Conservation Area in 2006. It seems that sometimes the smaller aspects of our lives can play a role in the bigger scheme of things!

*David A Lennette  
Vice-President of the Board of Directors  
May 29, 2015*

## **Pied Piper of Costa Rica**

Alvaro and I met because of the exquisite poison dart frogs and tree frogs of Costa Rica that I had seen in a traveling display. These live frogs excited my imagination like no travelogue or photos ever could. Within the year (1997), David and I were on a plane to see the frogs in their native country. The travel brochure from the Nature Conservancy International Trips was tantalizing and brief, mentioning that one-quarter of the small country was federally protected. I had then just finished reading the biography of Gifford Pinchot and his influential role in the establishment and management of the vast US National Forests. It occurred to us that Costa Rica's strong conservation ethics might also be traceable to a similarly crucial and influential counterpart(s). A short trip to the local library and a reading of *The Quetzal and the Macaw* (by David R Wallace) later, we learned that indeed, two individuals by the names of Mario Boza and Alvaro Ugalde were the movers and shapers of that country's impressive conservation policies. They instantly became our contemporary heroes. I mentally filed away the interesting information and concentrated on the preparation to meet my frogs.

Two days after we landed in Costa Rica, the Nature Conservancy designated naturalist local guide, Arturo Jarquin, announced unexpectedly that he had arranged an unofficial surprise side trip for us at the end of our tour. He wanted us to meet his friend and mentor Alvaro Ugalde. On hearing the name, I nearly fell off my chair, and thanked my luck and Arturo for giving me a chance to meet Alvaro in the flesh. As we neared the end of the trip, two fellow passengers in the group started to lobby aggressively for a shopping trip in downtown San Jose instead of meeting Alvaro. David and I favored (and prayed for) a visit to Alvaro's, and the third couple was neutral. Arturo was in the hot seat, but he kept his smile and announced on the last morning that he had a mysterious plan that would please us all. Our van wined through downtown San Jose, and then finally stopped — in front of Alvaro's house. To this day, I can still see those two ladies' unhappy faces and hear their grumbling as they entered Alvaro's home. I can only imagine what crossed their litigious minds (one was a lawyer and the other the wife of a lawyer). Just as Arturo knew, the two ladies may have walked into Alvaro's disappointed and even angry, but they left utterly charmed by their host and couldn't stop talking after the visit about the photos on the walls — of Alvaro being greeted by Queen Beatrice of the Netherlands, shaking hands with Ronald Reagan in the Rose Garden at the White House, of the Getty Prize, and the other innumerable awards. David and I, on the other hand, were utterly impressed by Alvaro's sincere conviction, his vision, his love and dedication to save his country's biodiversity for our planet's future generations. During our 5-hour plane ride home to California, we decided that we, too, must do our share.

We returned to Costa Rica the following year, made our proposal for a tiny conservation project to both Arturo and Alvaro. It took them a year to decide. By then, Alvaro was in between jobs and Arturo had resigned from Costa Rica Expeditions for unrelated personal reasons. They both accepted our proposed venture. Alvaro would pitch in whenever his

public duties permit; Arturo would work fulltime as project manager. And thus the Nectandra project was born.

Over the years, I discovered that Alvaro's face and voice read like a book. Normally optimistic, cheery and downright playful, his countenance would turn hard, his eyes from grey to glowing green, and his voice to steely quiet whenever his causes were threatened. He could hold an entire audience spellbound with stories, conveyed complex concepts with just a few heartfelt examples, or nailed his opponents in their place with a few short sentences. He could be singularly decisive, enough to negotiate and convince hundreds of angry gold miners to give up their digs to create a national park, yet would agonize for weeks before deciding whether to accept a lecture invitation or to receive an award. He thought nothing of putting the president of the country on hold, but couldn't bring himself to deny his time to the downtrodden. In the 17 years I had known him, the country went through four administrations. Knowing that his beloved parks were at the mercy of the unpredictable and new politics, Alvaro would pace the floor and chewed his nails like an expectant father. It was heart wrenching to watch him before and during each national election.

For Alvaro, Costa Rica's national parks and biodiversity were his life, wife, mistress and children all rolled into one. He always said he had no greater wish than to die for his causes, in the trench with his boots on. And so he did.

*Evelyne T Lennette*  
*Sec./Treasurer of the Board of Directors*  
*May 30, 2015*

## A Dream Come True

For many years I heard Alvaro asking different groups of people to do something to help nature and his work on conservation issues. They could be friends, family and foreigners. I have kept this message in mind since 1985 when I was working for his family in a little farm in Atenas. I, too, dreamed of helping his causes. My chance came in 1998 while I was working as a naturalist guide with Costa Rica Expeditions. I took every opportunity to introduce my conservationist-minded tourists to Alvaro and to his work. Little did I expect that one such couple, David and Evelynne Lennette, took up Alvaro's challenge in a serious way. They were two medical virologists from California in one of my Nature Conservancy tours. They proposed a garden project using Costa Rican native flora (and fauna) to promote conservation through education. Knowing my horticultural training at Longwood Garden in Maryland and the Missouri Botanical Garden, they asked if I would help design, build and manage such a garden. Fearful that it was all a dream, it took Alvaro and myself a year to organize our thoughts enough to say yes.

Alvaro's and my first assignment was to get a piece of land in the cloud forest, where biodiversity is highest. The Pacific slope around Monteverde cloud forest area was already too populated, the Braulio Carillo area too expensive. On the recommendation of a friend from Monteverde, Alvaro and I started to search for possibilities on the Atlantic slope of Monteverde, around a little known community called La Balsa; it is part of the biological corridor named Paso de Las Nubes (Corridor of the Clouds).

Real estate information was not easy to come by in those days, but Alvaro had an inspiration. He visited his barber in San José. Within minutes, the barber-cum-realtor presented Alvaro with an one hundred hectare candidate property in that area. Alvaro dispatched me to locate the owner Marina A. and to schedule a joint inspection. Hurricane Mitch just came through this country and the road was barely passable, but I eventually got there. My eyes just couldn't believe the pristine state of the forest while I was hiking through. When I got back to our home in San Jose, I excitedly told Alvaro to go see it. So he did, with his long time friend Pedro León on a Sunday. They started to explore the land with Israel, a La Balsa old-timer who claimed to know the property well, but as usual, once inside the thick forest, anyone can get lost. They must have gone in circles. For many hours, the party crashed through the forest trying to find their way. Tired, hungry and upset, Alvaro yelled at Israel "I don't know how you are going to find the corner of this property but just make sure you get me out of this forest NOW!"

That day, they not only got lost, they also encountered footprints of tapir, puma and others animals among the solid vegetation. After hours of walking and feeling lost and hungry, they returned to San Jose exhausted but thrilled. Alvaro said, "We found it, the dream of Nectandra will begin for the four of us" — Alvaro, Evelynne, David and me.

*Arturo Jarquin Perera*  
*Member, Board of Directors*  
*June 13, 2015*

## Budding Biologists

I met Alvaro after my return from Baylor University in Texas, early in 1968 where I majored in Biology, while registering for my first graduate course at Universidad de Costa Rica. We bore good heads of hair, then, while Alvaro also wore a beard. Soon he had befriended my whole family, including my grandmother whom he nicknamed *Mariquita*, my brothers Moi and Samy. A photograph from those early days shows the three of us (including Moi), partying in the hills of Heredia, drinking wine from a *bota española* (Photo included. As photo shows, both Alvaro and Moi smoked tobacco; a habit they both eventually dropped).



Moi, Alvaro, Pedro, 1968 Heredia

We were soon taking advanced biology courses with Doug Robinson, Rafael Lucas Rodriguez, Bill Bussing, Luis Fournier, Alvaro Wille and other members of a very fine cohort of scientists in the school of biology. We often studied together for exams, and developed a drilling

system to guess the exam questions, which usually allowed us to get the best grades in the class! In the fabulous entomology course we took with Dr. Wille, two biologists in a sea of agronomy students, we collected and pinned down the best insect collection (a requirement for the course), including an *Epipteripatus* which Alvaro collected and made the best grades,

so that Prof. Wille exempted us from the final exam, which made the agronomy students really pissed.

During these early days, we both discovered the amazing diversity of living creatures in Costa Rica but still were not sure what we wanted to do for our careers. One fine day Alvaro showed me a letter of invitation that Mario Boza had pried from the US Forest Service for a course offered by the US National Park Service. Alvaro wondered what I thought about his going for several weeks to a course in a National Park. I encouraged him to go (*¡Ni lo pensés!*), which he did. He came back as a transformed man. If anything shook his brain, as far as I recall, it was this exposure to the concept of protected lands, pristine forests and ecosystems protected from humans, for the future and for their own value. Alvaro returned a changed man. All of a sudden he had found his *Norte*, and with his usual passion was soon involved working for the newly hatched Costa Rican national parks, that would soon become consolidated under the Sistema de Parques Nacionales y Áreas Afines. Before I knew it, Alvaro was the Park Director, moving and leading a national effort that only started in the 1970s, but due to his clarity of vision and direction, he had become recognized as one of the best in the world. Alvaro always knew where to go next; the essence of a true leader. He spearheaded the creation of Corcovado by Oduber, with the help of Minister of Agriculture Rodolfo Quirós. He supported Mario Boza in the creation of Amistad when Carazo was President. He pushed for the creation of many other protected areas including Parque Nacional Cahuita, where he personally faced the community in a *cabildo abierto*.

Many decades later, after he had retired from the Ministry, one fine day Alvaro invited me to San Ramon, for yet another project he was cooking, I can't recall the exact date. He told me to wear boots and field biology gear since we were walking into a rain forest. Just like in the old days as students we geared up, always ready to catch the frog and turn rocks for insects and other *bichos*. We drove past San Ramon into an awesome cloud forest, wet and evergreen; each tree a whole microcosm of epiphytes, bromeliads, orchids, diverse herps and very muddy paths into the forest. We walked into the forest that seemed untouched: large and ancient hardwoods still in place — for sale at a bargain price. Why not a private effort to protect it? After all, working with the government can be so frustrating at times. So, before we got lost in the forest that day, as it was so easy to do before landmarks were established, it dawned on me that Alvaro was on to another project. He told me about his friends Evelyne and David, which I would like for sure, “‘cause they are molecular biologists!” After we managed to find our way out, no thanks to my efforts, Alvaro asked me what I thought. I said “I approve!”. He said “That’s good because I want you to be on the Board of Directors!”. I have been on the Board of *Nectandra Institute* since then and feel it is a privilege to be part of it. I profoundly admire its members including our dear Anne Gallie, for whom I hold a profound admiration.

It was a huge privilege to know Alvaro for so many years and to share as a friend in so many battles. I always learned from him. It was also a privilege to share our families and friends through decades of friendship. And, of course, it was a fortune to share ideals and ideas with him.

I celebrate the life of Anne and Alvaro and thank them for sharing their time with those of us that are still alive. It warms my heart that they lie together under the shade of the big garlic tree in Corcovado. Makes me want to join them there when my turn comes.

*Pedro Ernesto León Azofeifa*  
Member, Board of Directors  
June 26, 2015

## My Last Two Conversations with Alvaro

Sitting on that beach in Santa Rosa National Park that late afternoon in May 2011, I tried my best to soak in the significance of the moment. Next to me sat my friend, mentor, and boss at Nectandra Institute, Alvaro Ugalde. Forty years prior, accompanied by Daniel Oduber, president of the legislative assembly at the time and later President of Costa Rica, and other dignitaries, Alvaro had inaugurated Santa Rosa as the country’s first national park.

I was an inexperienced American ex-pat from Los Angeles, California, in 2007 when I started to work for Nectandra Institute and Alvaro. Thanks to life’s twists and turns, I somehow ended up working alongside one of the founding fathers of Costa Rica’s system of national parks and protected areas. Had it not been for all that Alvaro did to help Costa Rica become one of the world’s best examples of a country that protects nature, there’d likely be no Nectandra Institute to speak of. The entire country, in fact, would be a very different place. Hydroelectricity is Costa Rica’s principal energy supply, generated by the power of flowing rivers whose headwaters lie within these nationally protected areas. Potable water is available to almost 100% of the population in large part due to groundwater recharge zones located inside protected boundaries. Eco-tourism is one of the country’s strongest economic engines. Costa Rica is what it is largely because 25% of its land area has been given some form of nationally protected status, and Alvaro was one of the principal leaders that made this happen.

Despite all his accomplishments, Alvaro was not one to rest on his laurels. Just a few days before he passed away, I phoned and had my second-to-last interaction with him. “Hello Luis,” he answered in a hushed tone. “Is this a good time?” I asked. “Well, at this moment I’m inside the President’s office getting ready for a very important meeting,” he replied. I learned afterwards that he had met that day with the President of Costa Rica, the Minister of Energy and Environment, and others to defend under-staffed Corcovado National Park, located on Costa Rica’s Osa Peninsula and Alvaro’s pick for the most beautiful place in the world.

A few days later, on Friday, February 13th 2015, I spoke with Alvaro one last time. Once again, I called him on the phone, only this time he answered with laughter in his voice. In the background I could hear loud music and a festive atmosphere. “Are you having a party?” I asked. “Yes!” he happily exclaimed. “I’m at the senior center and we’re having a Valentine’s Day fiesta!” For several weeks, Alvaro had been volunteering at the center and the experience had brought him



much joy and satisfaction. We had a quick conversation, thanked and said goodbye to each other, and Alvaro returned to dance and celebrate.

These were my last two exchanges with Alvaro...one serious, the other cheerful, both equally significant. Two moments that for me captured perfectly Alvaro's amazing ability to inspire and move those around him, be they presidents or everyday citizens.

*Luis Villa  
Chief Operating Officer  
June 4, 2015*

## **Alvaro Ugalde Eco-Loan Seed Fund**

To honor Alvaro's vision and to continue his conservation legacy, Nectandra Institute has set up the Alvaro Ugalde Eco-Loan Seed Fund — a revolving capital loan fund. The money raised will be loaned (interest-free) to other Costa Rican non-profit organizations to start their very own eco-loan programs, or to participate in Nectandra Institute's current loan program. This way, we can expand Nectandra Institute's conservation objectives to watersheds that are geographically distant from our current target area of the La Balsa Watershed. It will also amplify our reach and impact without increasing the size of the Nectandra organization.

Since 2007, Nectandra Institute's Eco-Loan Program has proven to be very effective in promoting forest regeneration and conservation education. It is enthusiastically accepted by our partner communities (more than 30 to date), as indicated by their perfect record of repayments. We would like to encourage other organizations to launch similar eco-loan programs by providing seed loans. Hopefully, the Alvaro Ugalde Eco-Loan Seed Fund will trigger an exponential cascade of forest restoration, education and conservation programs elsewhere in Costa Rica.

Two private donors have pledged separate matches to any donations made to The Alvaro Ugalde Eco-Loan Seed Fund, up to \$25000, thereby tripling the value of any contributions. Donations From U.S. and Canadians contributors are fully tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.

To learn more about Nectandra Institute's Eco-Loan Program and/or contribute to this new fund, [visit our donation page](#) on our website [www.nectandra.org](http://www.nectandra.org). Please specify that your donation is for the Alvaro Ugalde Eco-Loan Seed Fund.

## **Alvaro Ugalde Retrospective**

The first week of July, we will launch a special new section on our website dedicated and devoted to Alvaro Ugalde's legacy, his life and work.

We invite you to share a few words, fond memories, or a short anecdote about Alvaro. Your story will become part of the collection on this special retrospective web site. Previous contributors are welcome to make additional submissions.

Email your short narrative (~500 words) by February 14, 2016 to [admin@nectandra.org](mailto:admin@nectandra.org). Feel free to include a picture that you

may have taken together with Alvaro or that illustrates your story in some way.

Please share this invitation with any others who may be interested in sharing their story or words about Alvaro.

Thank you and we look forward to your story.

## **Other News Highlights 2015**

*\*\*\* Reported by Luis Villa \*\*\**

**Jan 2015** Young volunteers from local communities worked with Nectandra Institute staff to [collect aquatic invertebrates](#) from sampling points along streams and rivers in the upper [Balsa River Watershed](#). In 2009, Nectandra Institute began monitoring over 20 stream locations twice yearly looking at which macroinvertebrates are present. Some of these organisms are known to be tolerant to organic-based pollution, while others are not. By analyzing the mix of insects found at each sampling point, we can infer something about stream water quality.

**Feb 2015** Nectandra Institute offered a series of educational seminars to representatives from our partner community water management associations. Topics covered included general facts and figures about water, best practices in water resources management, and climate change. [Community water management associations are some of Nectandra Institute's strongest allies in our forest conservation and restoration work](#). Together with these and other local organizations, we have been able to protect more than 560 acres of important watershed lands.

**Mar 2015** Nectandra Institute [inaugurated the E. Ann Gallie Nature Sanctuary](#), named in honor of one of our board members and longtime supporter who passed away in 2014. Located in San Ramón, Costa Rica, across the road from the [Nectandra Cloud Forest Garden and Reserve](#), the sanctuary consists of 45 acres of tropical cloud forest. For every 100 acres of rain forest in the world, less than 3 acres are cloud forest. This rare ecosystem is one of the most biologically diverse on the planet, hosting countless species of plants, animals, and other forms of life.

**Apr 2015** [Analysis work was completed](#) on the samples of macroinvertebrates obtained from various points along streams and rivers in the upper [Balsa River watershed](#). An average of almost 300 aquatic insects and other organisms were previously collected at each of the 24 locations. Volunteers and Nectandra Institute staff then classified the specimens by family in order to obtain a water quality rating for each stream sampling point. The water quality score is calculated using a system that accounts for the level of tolerance each type of organism has for contaminated water.

**Apr 2015** Three hundred trees were adopted by the public during [Liga CUENCA's participation in a fair](#) celebrating the

Municipality of Zarcero's centennial. [Liga CUENCA](#) is a consortium of local water management associations and one of Nectandra Institute's strongest allies in our work to protect and restore tropical highland forests. Through Liga CUENCA's "Adopt-a-Tree" project funds are raised for ecological restoration efforts in order to improve the health of local water resources, forests and watersheds.

**May 2015** Volunteers from a local high school [assisted Nectandra Institute's staff biologist in field work aimed at documenting ecological succession](#) occurring on lands purchased with [eco-loan financing](#) by our community partners. The process involves measuring the height of the vegetation and surveying the dominant plants at various sampling points within each restoration property. This information is then used together with additional information such as aerial photographs to zone the entire property into different levels of ecological succession.

**Jun 2015** Rainy season kicked off this year with [tree planting work](#) on land that belongs to the water management association for the Costa Rican communities of Ángeles Norte and Alto Villegas. A pioneer plant in large gaps *Heliocarpus appendiculatus* or burío, as it is known locally, was the native

tree species used on this particular occasion. The property has a total area of 27 acres and is undergoing ecological restoration in order to bolster the protection for the communities' on-site sources of potable water. The water association received an [eco-loan](#) from Nectandra Institute in 2007 in order to purchase the land. This tree planting event was made possible thanks to the support of Liga CUENCA's "Adopt a Tree" project. Liga CUENCA is a consortium of [community water management associations](#) working primarily in Costa Rica's upper Balsa River watershed.

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