



ACTIVITY REPORT: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE NORTHEAST ECOLOGICAL CORRIDOR FORUM

REPORT PREPARED BY: Luis Villanueva-Cubero, Environmental Sciences Program, University of Puerto Rico IGERT Cohort

DATE: Saturday, October 15, 2011

TIME: 8:30 AM – 4:05 PM

SPONSORSHIP: Students in Free Enterprise, Inter-American University of PR at Fajardo; Pro-Northeast Ecological Corridor Coalition; University of Puerto Rico Graduate School of Planning Student Council

COORDINATORS: Prof. Osvaldo Gelabert-Toro, Luis Villanueva-Cubero, Ana E. Pérez-Quintero

LIAISONS: Camilla Feibelman, coordinator of the Sierra Club of Puerto Rico and Angie Colón-Pagán, President of the Pro-Northeast Ecological Corridor Coalition

PURPOSE:

From an academic standpoint, to present to the community of Puerto Rico at large, but specifically the Northeast, the importance of maintaining the physical integrity of the ecosystem that comprises the Northeast Ecological Corridor (NEC) and its 1202 hectares, the main points of the Integral Land Use Plan for the NEC of 2008 and sustainable development proposals as presented by faculty and students from the Natural Sciences, Architecture and Planning faculties at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus as well as Students in Free Enterprise from the Inter-American University of Puerto Rico, Fajardo Campus.

In the forum discussion was generated regarding several alternatives for job growth, business development and sustainable development of these extraordinary natural resources. These initiatives were presented as counterproposals to current development plans sponsored by the government of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico that include development of condo-hotels and a shopping center within 177 hectares of forest within the NEC, under the designation “Grand Northeast Reserve”.

The timing of this even was crucial given that the Senate of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico is considering Bill 2282 that would establish the preservation, conservation and restoration of the NEC as public policy and would confer natural reserve designation.

FORMAT: Each presentation was followed by a five to ten minute comments, questions and answer session. A final comments and question session was conducted after all presentations to elicit the guests opinions and future possible actions. Mr. Ángel Berríos, community leader at a borough close to the NEC provided final reflections.

ITINERARY:

- 8:30AM – 9:00AM Registration
- 9:00AM – 9:10AM Welcome: Prof. Osvaldo Gelabert Toro
- 9:10AM – 9:50AM Mr. Luis Jorge Rivera Herrera, PPL; Initiative for Sustainable Development
“Northeast Ecological Corridor Reserve vs. Grand Northeast Reserve: Comparative Analysis and Implications”
- 9:50AM – 10:20AM Equipo de Ciencia Pro-Corredor Ecológico del Noreste; Joel Mercado, Ana Elisa Pérez Quintero, y Anna Laura Beye
“Scientific Education Activities for the Preservation of the Northeast Ecological Reserve”
- 10:20AM – 10:50AM Mr. Roberto E. Morales López, Geographer; University of Puerto Rico Social Sciences Faculty alumni
“Attitudes toward Tourism Development, Places of Resistance and Mapification of social value in Puerto Rico’s Northeast Coastal Communities”
- 10:50AM – 11:00AM Recess
- 11:00AM – 11:30AM Elio S. Martínez Joffre, Arq; Professor at the School of Architecture of the University of Puerto Rico

Mr. Omar A. González Alfonso; student at the School of Architecture of the University of Puerto Rico
“Community Design Workshop Proposals for the Northeast Ecological Corridor”
- 11:30AM – 12:00AM Rose Marie Bernier; student at University of Puerto Rico’s Graduate School of Planning
“Summary of Proposals for the Northeast Ecological Corridor from the 2009 Urban Planning 2009 Class of Dr. Aníbal Sepúlveda”
- 12:00M – 1:00PM Lunch

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| 1:00PM – 1:30PM | Mr. Jardany Díaz Salgado, PPL; University of Puerto Rico’s Graduate School of Planning alumnus <i>“Revitalization of Luquillo’s Urban Center as a Gateway to the Northeast Ecological Corridor”</i> |
| 1:30PM – 2:00PM | Mr. Anselmo Álvarez Esparra, PPL; University of Puerto Rico’s Graduate School of Planning alumnus <i>“Connectivity among Community-Scaled Touristic Places in Cabezas Borough in the Municipality of Fajardo”</i> |
| 2:00PM – 2:30PM | Ms. María J. Lecompte-Shiba, PPL; University of Puerto Rico’s Graduate School of Planning alumnus <i>“Communities and Corridors: Sustainable Development via Entrepreneurship in Juan Martín Community”</i> |
| 2:30PM – 3:00PM | Students in Free Enterprise, Inter-American University of PR, Fajardo Chapter <i>“ONE Development in the Northeast Ecological Corridor: Proposals”</i> |
| 3:00PM – 3:30PM | Prof. Osvaldo Gelabert Toro; Tourism Professor at the Inter-American University of Puerto Rico, Fajardo Campus <i>“Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas”</i> |
| 3:30PM – 3:50PM | Questions and Discussion |
| 3:50PM – 4:00PM | Reflections from Mr. Ángel Berríos, leader of Defenders of the Northeast Ecological Corridor in Juan Martin Community |
| 4:00PM – 4:05PM | <u>Acknowledgements and Closure</u> |

TOTAL ATTENDANCE: 101 guests

VIP GUESTS:

- (1) Ms. Dilcia González Gandarillas, D.P.A.; Park Ranger - Public Information and Community Relations, National Park Service
- (2) Mr. Rogelio Figueroa, Politician and Environmental Activist
- (3) Rafael E. Marín Martínez; Regional Director, Puerto Rico Small Business and Technology Development Center, Fajardo Chapter

PENDING SYNERGISTIC ACTIONS:

(1) Citizen's Agenda Forum

The Inter-American University, Fajardo Chapter of Students in Free Enterprise are going to present some of their proposals at the Citizen's Agenda Forum on Sunday, October 23, 2011. The series of forums are a project sponsored by Citizens Agenda, in order to promote a culture of participatory democracy and government accountability. In these forums which have taken place during the past seven years citizens discuss Puerto Rico's problems in six basic topics: education, economy, security, environment, health and family.

El Nuevo Día Newspaper sponsors these events and the proposals gathered in these forums will serve to create a new citizen's agenda that will be shared with all Puerto Rico political parties prior to the release of their platforms in 2012, so that potential future leaders might take them into consideration.

(2) Students in Free Enterprise, Inter-American University of PR at Fajardo Chapter

The SIFE students under the guidance of their mentor, Prof. Osvaldo Gelabert-Toro expressed interest in conducting another forum to get input from citizens interested in implementing some of the initiatives discussed and become entrepreneurs. They also will discuss and consider future actions to be undertaken to include:

- i. Mangrove restoration project
- ii. Tree planting project
- iii. Business incubators for artisans
- iv. Needs assessment for residents of communities nearby the NEC that might be interested in participating in eco-tourism ventures

Prof. Gelabert requested a tour of the NEC for him and his students in order to familiarize himself and his students with the terrain and its surroundings.

(3) Puerto Rico Small Business and Technology Development Center, Fajardo Campus

The Puerto Rico SBTDC is an initiative of the Inter American University of Puerto Rico and the US Small Business Administration (<http://www.prsbtcd.org/index.html>). The information

compiled at the forum will be sent to the SBTDC Fajardo Regional Director, Mr. Rafael E. Marín in hopes to elicit their support to any SIFE venture dealing with the NEC.

(4) Agents of Change Proposal

The Integrative Graduate Education and Traineeship (IGERT) Program is a National Science Foundation (NSF) nation-wide program intended to catalyze a cultural change in graduate education by establishing innovative new models for graduate education and training in a fertile environment for collaborative research that transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries. IGERT students participating in their second year of PhD studies in the Environmental Sciences Program at the University of Puerto Rico must participate in the Agents of Change Program. Throughout this year they will develop guidelines to solve a specific environmental problem in Puerto Rico and present it to the appropriate agencies or organization. It is suggested that a proposal be made so that a two-student team participate in solving a problem dealing with sustainable development in NEC. Any proposal would use as reference the investigative work presented at the forum as well as current academic investigations being conducted. Among them, two master's thesis: Mr. Ernesto Olivares, a student at the Autonomous University of Costa Rica is studying ecosystem services provided by the NEC and Mrs. Camilla Feibelman, coordinator of Sierra Club Puerto Rico and a student at the UPR's Graduate School of Planning is working on her thesis that deals with ecotourism in the NEC.

(5) Northeast Chapter of the College of Social Work Professionals

Mr. José Rodríguez, Vice-President of the Northeast Chapter of the Puerto Rico Social Work Alliance expressed his interest in receiving more information regarding proposals for sustainable development in NEC.

(6) Pro-Northeast Ecological Corridor Coalition Development Committee

The PNECC Development Committee headed by Mrs. Carmen Guerrero will monitor all initiatives and provide periodical follow up, to include the printing of brochures to be given out to neighbors of communities surrounding the NEC that may be interesting in establishing businesses, as to provide them with information and get them in touch with SIFE Fajardo Chapter. An idea brought forth by PNECC dealing with a plant nursery business is similar to a project that SIFE developed in the Island-Municipality of Vieques, and could be presented to them for further action.

PHOTOS



El Planificador Luis Jorge Rivera-Herrera de *Iniciativa para un Desarrollo Sustentable* explica a los participantes la importancia de preservar la integridad del Corredor Ecológico del Noreste en el Foro de Propuestas para Desarrollo Sostenible en el Corredor Ecológico del Noreste.

Photo from Waldemar Alcobas, October 15, 2011



Planificador Luis Jorge Rivera-Herrera

Photo from Waldemar Alcobas, October 15, 2011



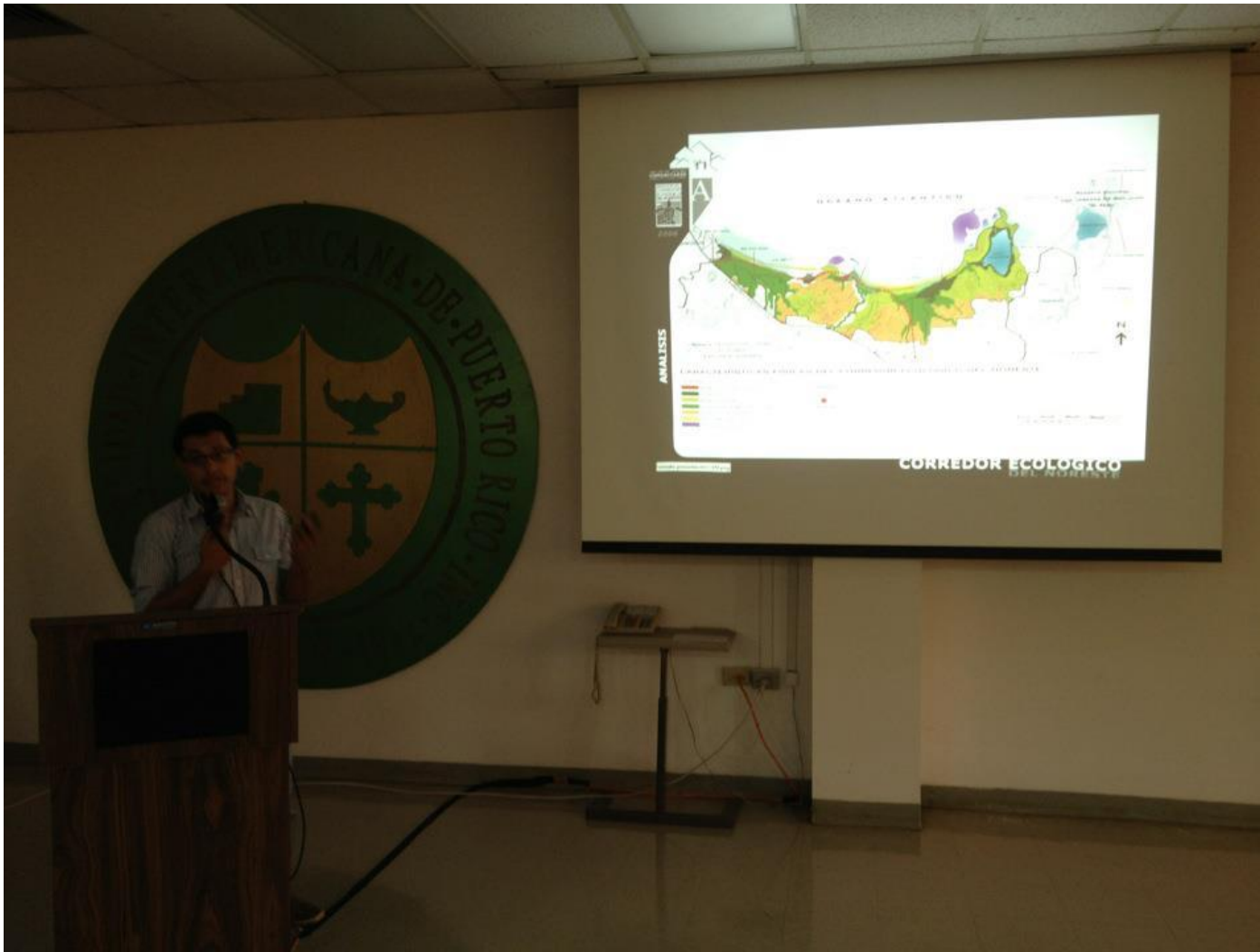
(De izq. a der.) Ana E. Pérez-Quintero, Anna Laura Beye y Joel Mercado del *Equipo de Ciencia Pro-Corredor Ecológico del Noreste* comparten diferentes actividades científicas llevadas a cabo en la zona del Corredor.

Photo from Waldemar Alcobas, October 15, 2011



El Geógrafo Roberto E. Morales López, egresado de la Facultad de Ciencias Sociales de la UPR comparte con el público los hallazgos de su tesis de maestría titulada "*Actitudes al Desarrollo Turístico, lugares en Resistencia y Mapificación del valor social en Comunidades de la Costa Noreste de Puerto Rico*"

Photo from Waldemar Alcobas, October 15, 2011



El estudiante de la Escuela de Arquitectura de la UPR, Omar A. González Alfonso comparte las propuestas que surgieron del *Taller de Diseño Comunitario* para el Corredor Ecológico del Noreste dirigida por el Arq. Elio S. Martínez-Joffre.

Photo from Waldemar Alcobas, October 15, 2011



Maqueta del Centro de Visitantes para el Corredor Ecológico del Noreste realizada por estudiantes del *Taller Comunitario* de la Escuela de Arquitectura de la UPR.

Photo from Waldemar Alcobas, October 15, 2011



La Sra. Rose-Marie Bernier, estudiante de la Escuela Graduada de Planificación de la UPR presenta la ponencia preparada por el Dr. Aníbal Sepúlveda de dicha institución.

Photo from Waldemar Alcobas, October 15, 2011