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HELP US HEAL THE AMAZON

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When I moved to the Amazon in 1984 to study how to coax forests back onto abandoned cattle pastures, I was struck by the forest's tenacity. Cut it down, burn it, plant it with pasture grasses, graze it with very heavy animals, then abandon it and, guess what?

. . . the forest comes back.

Green, leafy shoots arise from vestigial tree roots and seeds buried in the soil; fruit bats and birds that feed in nearby forest patches drop tree seeds in the pasture in nutrient-rich packets. Only after the most extreme treatment of the land–like plowing–does the forest lose its capacity to regenerate.

The need to heal the Amazon forest is urgent. We can glimpse one possible future of the region in the state of Mato Grosso, in southeastern Amazônia, where extensive forest clearing for cattle pastures and soybean fields has increased the length of the dry season by a month. Yes, that's right–forest loss has inhibited rainfall. Rain in the Amazon, you see, depends on the forest. Cut it down and rainfall becomes less abundant and less reliable. And because of the longer dry season, even mature forests are catching fire. The indigenous tribes of the Xingu River headwaters have been forced to become forest fire fighters and their manioc (cassava) crops often fail because of drought.

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The Kamayura tribal fire brigade of the Xingu River headwaters "Parque Indigena do Xingu", trained by Brigada Aliança da Terra. Their fight against forest fire in a drying climate has become an annual challenge. Photo: Tito West.

Young, regenerating Amazon forests quickly recover the rainfall–creating features of the mature forest. They release water vapor to the atmosphere even during the peak of the dry season. It is possible to heal the Amazon climate.

This year, Earth Innovation Institute teams in Brazil and Peru helped Amazon states and regional governments covering nearly one third of the forest move closer to receiving the climate finance they need to fund their forest-friendly development strategies. This funding will help indigenous peoples cope with the changing climate and improve their livelihoods as it creates incentives to slow forest clearing and to protect from fire both mature and regenerating forests on abandoned land.

Please help us heal the Amazon by making a tax-exempt donation today! As a non-profit charity, our work is only possible through the generosity of supporters like you.

Wishing you a joyous and peaceful year end!