

WHOLE FOREST

The Whole Forest story began in 2002 when Peter Pinchot, a recent graduate of the Yale School of Forestry, visited his close friend, David Smith, who was volunteering for the Peace Corps in Cristobal Colón, Ecuador. While he was there, the city's once abundant rainforest was becoming increasingly barren each day due to illegal logging and massive oil palm plantations. Inspired by his conservationist grandfather Gifford Pinchot's principles of conservation, Peter set out to create Whole Forest (formerly EcoMadera), a social enterprise that promotes a sustainable economy and encourages forest conservation while improving the livelihood of local residents through the production and sale of sustainably harvested wood products.



Over 65 members of the Cristobal Colón community who depend on the Chocó rainforest are employed by Whole Forest.

The SEG Network Effect

Peter's search for solutions to end deforestation led him to SEG's 2015 Impact Accelerator. Whole Forest had already been in existence for 13 years, with \$2.85 million dollars in revenue and a team of 65 community members in Ecuador buying raw materials that would then go on to support over 400 families. Nevertheless, Peter credits the Impact Accelerator as a profoundly valuable experience for him as a leader. After graduating, Whole Forest raised \$1.6 million from an anonymous SEG community member to purchase more land and save more forests. "That investor told us he is convinced our community forestry intervention can save more forests than his own personal investment in a permanent reserve with no economic development," says Peter.

Most recently, Whole Forest has secured a public-private partnership with the Ecuadorian government. To date, Whole Forest has conserved 15 million tons of carbon and 25,000 acres of forest. Moving forward, Peter plans to scale up. He hopes that Whole Forest can become a model for other environmentalists. "I want people to get excited about climate change and know that they can be a part of the change," he says. "You have to be an optimist to create a positive impact. It won't happen with a pessimistic viewpoint."

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