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**SUBJECT: PRESS RELEASE**

**FROM: Rainforest Connection**

**Rainforest Connection Surpasses Kickstarter Goal to Help Protect Rainforests in Asia & Africa, Forges New Partnerships with Indigenous Groups in Latin America**

New partnerships in Brazil with the Tembé Indigenous People and Tribes of the Mamoni Valley Preserve in Panama enable the tech start-up to help protect indigenous lands through innovative anti-deforestation pilot projects.

**SAN FRANCISCO – July 21, 2014 –** Rainforest Connection (www.rfcx.org), a San Francisco startup that transforms used smartphones into the world’s first real-time alert system to combat illegal deforestation, announced today that it is partnering with indigenous tribes such as the Tembé people of the Amazon, to protect native lands under threat of destruction from massive black market illegal logging operations.

After successfully reaching its first stage funding goal of $100,000—with a video that shows how many cars can be “taken off the road” by protecting a square mile of rainforest ([see video](http://bit.ly/rfcx-video-0721)), and help from celebrity activists like musician Neil Young ([read the letter from Neil Young](https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1003614822/ponomusic-where-your-soul-rediscovers-music/posts/907099))—Rainforest Connection is receiving domestic and international inquiries from potential partners looking to protect their forests and native lands from illegal logging.

Although Brazil has implemented measures to reduce the destruction of the Amazon, illegal logging in key areas has risen 151% between 2011 and 2012 (source: Brazilian NGO IMAZON). This is why the Tembé people, in partnership with the Equipe de Conservação da Amazônia ( ECAM), have decided to join forces with RFCx in protecting key access points used for illegal logging activity. RFCx will pilot their system where cell service already exists, registering the sounds of the trucks as they enter Tembé indigenous lands and send real-time alerts to the Tembé rangers and local officials, before the logging begins, offering the best chance for real-time response.

ECAM, which partners with the Skoll Foundation, USAID and Google, has been collaborating with indigenous communities to protect native rainforests for over 15 years. Vasco M. van Roosmalen, ECAM’s director, is currently heading up the program to train 30 Tembé forest rangers as first responders to stop illegal deforestation and large-scale incursions onto their land.

"The technology being developed by Rainforest Connection is an extremely powerful tool for the protection of rainforests, especially in our case - when combined with the on-the-ground presence and determination of local indigenous groups serving as guardians of their traditional lands which occupy over a quarter of the entire Amazon region” ~Vasco M. van Roosmalen, Equipe de Conservação da Amazônia - ECAM

The Tembé tribe, a population of approximately 1500 people, recently won a large victory that returns lost lands to them, giving them title to over 600,000 hectares of rainforest. Protecting the area has been a challenge, and the Tembé report massive illegal logging operations within their lands. On a regular basis, it is reported that groups of five to ten trucks at a time—moving on narrow dirt roads—haul illegal timber out of their territory in the Amazon rainforest.

With this partnership, RFCx is expanding its stretch goals in order to carry out the project in partnership with the Tembé, which they expect will cost $95,000 to complete. Avina Fundacion, ([see link](http://www.avina.net/esp/)) which identifies “tipping-point opportunities” in the region for the purpose of building regional alliances and sustainability partnerships, has come forward with $30,000 for the Rainforest Connection/Tembé project. In the final week of their Kickstarter campaign, Rainforest Connection is offering various incentives (“rewards”) to help reach the new goal, including $40 carbon offset certificates to the public. With their goal of fighting climate change by keeping trees standing, additional pilot projects will be essential for RFCx to expand their reach and collect more data.

An additional pilot in the Mamoni Valley Preserve in Panam, in partnership with the Guna indigenous population of Panama and the non-profit Earth Train, is also up for current consideration. RFCx is exploring feasibility with Earth Train to announce a plan that would eventually protect thousands of acres of rainforest in Panama, starting with covering 1000-5000 hectares of rainforest that is currently threatened by logging.

“The Mamoní Valley Preserve buffers an especially vulnerable part of the 250000-acre Narganá Wild Area”, said Enrique Arias, former Secretary General, Guna General Congress and Director of Earth Train’s Leadership and Guide Program. “We are especially excited about the opportunity to team up with Rainforest Connection on the application of the RFCx devices combined with digital mapping and other state-of-the-art tools.”

Further information, including photos, videos and additional visual assets is available at:  
http://rfcx.org/media