

February 26, 2016

Honorable President
Jimmy Morales Cabrera
President of Guatemala

Honorable Mr. President Morales,

We send cordial greetings to you and your cabinet from the music groups Maroon 5 (<http://www.maroon5.com/home/>) and Guster (<http://www.guster.com/>).

First and foremost, we congratulate you on the mandate that you have received from the people of Guatemala to lead the country, and write to salute you as Guatemala's new president.

We had the opportunity to visit your beautiful country in December 2015, and learn more about the innovative and effective forest management practices in Guatemala, specifically in the Maya Biosphere Reserve of Petén. We are interested in and dedicated to supporting sustainable forestry practices in two important contexts—the contribution of sustainable forestry to the mitigation of world climate change and its contribution to the battle against illegal logging, which is destroying precious forests around the world and boosting the high demand of wood products. In our case, the wood products closest to our activities as musicians are musical instruments.

We traveled to Petén to visit the community forest concessions of la Asociación de Comunidades Forestales de Petén (ACOFOP) in the multi-use zone of the Maya Biosphere Reserve, and to learn more about the world-renowned community management of these areas.

We were able to understand many of the challenges Guatemala faces in managing and protecting its rich natural resources, while we also witnessed one of the best examples in the world of collective and efficient management of tropical forests by communities. We benefited greatly from meetings with community forestry businesses, one of which was with El Esfuerzo Community Forest Enterprise operating in the Yaloch community concession, and from encounters with the Asociación de Comunidades Forestales del Petén, the Consejo Nacional de Áreas Protegidas, and the Instituto Nacional de Bosques.

We saw firsthand that the benefits of community forest management extend not only to the forests, but also to Guatemalan communities. Community forest management also supports the government management of the Consejo Nacional de Áreas Protegidas (CONAP), and ultimately community forest management benefits the world, which is truly dependent upon tropical forests such as those that communities conserve and manage in Guatemala.

The trip was unforgettable and confirmed what data has demonstrated; community concessions in Guatemala have maintained forest cover, deterred deforestation, and minimized forest fires, all while maintaining the health and biodiversity of ecosystems. The community concessions are an important example of how to mitigate climate change at the global level. Furthermore, they have contributed to making communities economically, socially and environmentally stronger because community members have the opportunity to use their natural resources sustainably.

The visit renewed our commitment to support efforts to counter illegal logging globally, and has moved us even more to support community forest management in Guatemala through our own consciousness-raising messages and efforts as musicians—sharing these messages globally.

We understand that one of the greatest challenges communities and the forests of Petén face is the impending expiration of the 25 year concession contracts.

We sincerely hope that during your presidency, community concession contracts will be extended in their totality, as is the desire of the organizations managing the concessions. We will be eagerly watching news and debate about the decision to extend the contracts. Like us, the international conservation community looks to Guatemala and the community concessions as an example to replicate.

Your government has the great opportunity to create a long term sustainable model of forest production, and above all else to sustain an internationally renowned conservation model.

We reiterate our congratulations, and look to you for political leadership in safeguarding Guatemala's forests and on securing the future of the community concessions during your tenure.

We sincerely hope to return to Guatemala in the future, to again visit community concessions and see continual growth in forest cover and successful management of local forest enterprises that directly benefit Guatemalan communities.

Sincerely,



Jesse Carmichael
Pianist and Guitarist, Maroon 5



James Valentine
Guitarist, Maroon 5



Adam Gardner
Guitarist and Singer, Guster

C.C.

Ingeniero Elder Manrique Figueroa Rodríguez
Executive Secretary
Consejo Nacional de Áreas Protegidas

Ingeniero Sydney Alexander Samuels Milson
Minister
Ministerio de Ambiente y Recursos Naturales