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## **“Panama at the Smithsonian” Program Series Highlights Relationship between the Smithsonian and the Republic of Panama**

The Smithsonian Latino Center, the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute and the Museo del Canal Interoceánico de Panamá will offer “Panama at the Smithsonian,” a series of 18 public programs and educational activities in Washington, Brooklyn, N.Y., and Panama throughout this year and early 2010. The series, which will include a signature exhibition, highlights Panama’s social and natural history, political and cultural development, scientific discovery and history and their impact on the United States, particularly the Smithsonian Institution.

“Panama at the Smithsonian continues the Smithsonian Latino Center’s tradition of showcasing a different Latin American country each year,” said Eduardo Díaz, director of the Smithsonian Latino Center. “From its unique geological formation millions of years ago, which changed ocean currents and the American continent, Panama continues to influence the sciences, as well as the arts and humanities.”

“Panama’s biodiversity first attracted Smithsonian naturalists in 1910, and today, scientists across the world come to STRI to access diverse tropical environments,” said Eldredge Bermingham, director of STRI in Panama City. “We are proud to be participating in this series to share the scientific discoveries of Panama and celebrate its people and culture who have been our partners in the diffusion of knowledge for almost 100 years.”

The “Panama at the Smithsonian” series kicked off in April with a free concert featuring world-acclaimed pianist and composer Danilo Pérez. Highlights of upcoming activities include a lecture on the tropical archaeology of Panama by STRI scientist Richard Cooke; a children’s puppet theater adapted from the Museo del Canal Interoceánico de Panamá’s “Tremendo Encontrón,” depicting the Spanish arrival to Panama in the 16th century; a children’s concert with D.C.-based Grupo Folklórico de Panamá; a community festival celebrating Caribbean heritage day in Brooklyn; and an onstage conversation with legendary Panamanian musician, composer and actor, Rubén Blades.

From Oct. 5 to May 31, 2010, visitors will also have the opportunity to experience a multisensory, bilingual exhibition that illustrates Panama's human and natural history since the rise of the isthmus 3 million years ago. "Panamanian Passages," in the Ripley Center will include audio and visual elements, as well as live flora native to Panama. Interactive educational tours for school groups will accompany the exhibition and focus on Panama as a global crossroads exploring the rise of the transcontinental railroads, the creation of the Panama Canal and its impact on geography and society, the relationship between people and the environment, and a look at modern-day Panama.

"Thanks to the program 'Panama at the Smithsonian,' which includes a broad series of activities, visitors to the Smithsonian will have the opportunity to engage with a diverse sampling of Panamanian cultural expressions, as well as some of the major points of reflection on its past and present," said Angeles Ramos Baquero, executive director and chief curator of the Museo del Canal Interoceánico de Panamá, an affiliate of the Smithsonian.

STRI, headquartered in Panama City, Panama, is the only unit of the Smithsonian Institution outside of the United States. The institute furthers the understanding of tropical nature and its importance to human welfare, trains students to conduct research in the tropics and promotes conservation by increasing public awareness of the diversity and importance of tropical ecosystems.

The Smithsonian Latino Center is dedicated to ensuring that Latino contributions to arts, sciences and the humanities are highlighted, understood and advanced through the development and support of public programs, scholarly research, museum collections and educational opportunities at the Smithsonian Institution and its affiliated organizations across the United States.

The Museo del Canal Interoceánico de Panamá has the mission to preserve, research, interpret and highlight the history of Panama and its Canal by providing a rich variety of exhibitions and educational experiences to better understanding of the nation, culture and history. It is a member of the International Council of Museums and the American Association of Museums, and it was the first museum outside the United States to become an affiliate of the Institution.

For more information about the "Panama at the Smithsonian" program series and venue sites, as well as about the Smithsonian Latino Center, the public may visit <http://latino.si.edu>. For general Smithsonian information, the public may call (202) 633-1000 or TTY (202) 633-5285.

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