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## **Smithsonian Receives \$8 million HSBC Grant; Funding Will Expand Climate Change Research on Forests**

The Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI) today received an \$8 million grant from HSBC to fund the world's largest field experiment on the long-term effects of global change on forest dynamics. A new Global Earth Observatory system will compare climate change and forest carbon data from 17 countries around the world.

Located in Panama, STRI is the only Smithsonian bureau based outside of the United States; its focus is tropical research including rainforest ecology and other biodiversity issues. The HSBC grant will enable STRI to expand dramatically the research capability of its Center for Tropical Forest Science—the largest and longest-running tropical forest research network in the world.

The funding will expand the Center into a new, coordinated Global Earth Observatory system, increasing the quality of scientific data across 20 large-scale research plots (up to 120 acres in size) in the forests of 17 countries. The Smithsonian has studied tropical forests in Panama for nearly 100 years. The new Global Earth Observatories will be based on the longest-running standardized forest monitoring program, covering all the major tropical rainforest areas of the world.

“With this generous grant from HSBC, Smithsonian scientists will put key scientific data in the hands of decision makers responsible for global carbon policy and the water management of the Panama Canal,” said Ira Rubinoff, director of STRI.

HSBC Group Chairman, Stephen Green, announced the grant—the largest ever corporate donation to STRI—during his first visit to Panama today. “We know the success of our business in the long term depends on a stable environment. We believe that by supporting this research we will more fully understand the risks and business opportunities presented by climate change, and the Smithsonian Institution is the best-equipped and experienced organization of this kind to help us understand how our global environment is changing.”

For five years, HSBC will support the Center for Tropical Forest Science's research, beginning in the Panama Canal watershed, to do the following:

- **Carbon measurement:** Introduce carbon measurement in the existing research plots for the first time, creating global measures to illustrate the role tropical forests play in carbon storage
- **Tropical and temperate forests:** For the first time, compare the changes in tropical and temperate forests on a large scale and with standardized methods; in the process monitoring 3 million trees representing more than 8,000 species (more than 10 times the number of tree species in all of Europe and North America combined)
- **Panama Canal:** Create the largest ever field experiment on the role of forests in regulating the quality and quantity of water flow in the Panama Canal, the most important watershed for world commerce

“HSBC’s grant will bring science to a new level by enabling us to document quantitatively some of the environmental services that tropical forests provide, such as carbon uptake and water storage. This science is critical for understanding the role tropical forests play in the functioning of our planet as a whole,” said Stuart Davies, director of the Center for Tropical Forest Science.

“This project with the Center for Tropical Forest Science is critical to Panama,” said Joseph Salterio, chief executive officer of HSBC Bank (Panama). “The Canal is the lifeblood of the country and we know this economic engine could be threatened by changing rainfall patterns. The Canal supports a large amount of international trade and therefore is vital to international commerce.”

The HSBC grant will enable STRI’s Center for Tropical Forest Science in Panama to partner with other facilities to establish research plots in countries outside the tropics. The partnerships will strengthen comparative data and educate students and the public about tropical forest diversity and its relevance to the sustainability of the planet.

The STRI Center’s partners will be the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center in Maryland, the Smithsonian National Zoological Park’s Conservation and Research Center in Virginia and the Harvard Forest of the Arnold Arboretum in Massachusetts.

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**Note to Editors:** A fact sheet about the Panama Canal and STRI is attached. Photos of Center for Tropical Forest Science researchers conducting field work are available from STRI at the numbers above.

The Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute was established to further the understanding of tropical nature and its importance to human welfare, train students to conduct research in the tropics and promote conservation by increasing public awareness of the beauty and importance of tropical ecosystems.

HSBC Holdings plc serves more than 125 million customers worldwide through some 9,500 offices in 76 countries and territories in Europe, the Asia-Pacific region, the Americas, the Middle East and Africa. With assets of \$1.5 billion, HSBC is one of the world’s largest banking and financial services organizations.