



TCD Tropical Conservation &
Development Program

2016 Marianne Schmink Outstanding Dissertation Award

We are pleased to announce that **Dr. José Antonio Sierra Huelz** is the 2016 winner of the Marianne Schmink Outstanding Dissertation Award from UF's Tropical Conservation and Development Program. Dr. Sierra received his PhD from the School for Forest Resources and Conservation (SFRC) program under the supervision of Dr. Karen Kainer.



Dr. Sierra's dissertation, entitled ***"Tourism and forest livelihoods: linking architecture with tropical forest management"***, was considered an excellent match with the Marianne Schmink Outstanding Dissertation Award. For his dissertation research, Antonio studied the interactions between tropical forest use and tourism in the Mexican state of Quintana Roo. The region is characterized by community forest management and serves as the largest tourist destination in Latin America due to its spectacular coastline and beaches. Antonio's dissertation research integrates the two by linking the rustic architecture characteristic of touristic huts in the region to community-managed forests that supply materials to the tourism industry. Antonio combined in-depth studies on the population biology of several forest tree species with information on evolving economic demand and harvest pressures for varied building materials that influenced forest management decisions by communities over time.

The selection committee was particularly impressed with the interdisciplinary and holistic examination of the complex interaction between culture, history, land tenure and forest management decisions and their impacts on tree population structure and use of other non-timber forest products. The committee was also impressed with Antonio's reflections on how "diverse uses of native building materials and styles create an image of a tropical paradise, taking a broad multi-disciplinary perspective, which extended the Mexican example to cases around the world"

Antonio is currently working with Paisajes Manejo Integral A.C., a private NGO focused on biodiversity conservation and the promotion of sustainable development in rural and urban communities in Mexico. Their activities include transferring knowledge and experiences among communities; fostering collaboration among communities, Universities, civil organizations, the government and private sector; designing and developing strategies for sustainable approaches, ecological restoration and biodiversity conservation; and conducting applied research to generate solutions to social-environmental problems.

The Selection Committee was composed of TCD faculty Dr. Robert Buschbacher (Center for Latin American Studies and School for Forest Resources and Conservation) and Dr. Jane Southworth (Geography) and Vanessa Mintzer (TCD Alumna, Galveston Bay Foundation & University of Florida).

The TCD program congratulates Dr. Sierra on his selection as the 2016 recipient of the Marianne Schmink Outstanding Dissertation Award!