



CONFERENCE NEWS

The Power of Connections: Harvesting Lessons and Strengthening Coalitions for Amazonian Conservation

February 22-27, 2026

Meet the speakers!

Our annual conference begins in less than two weeks! We can't wait to bring our "Power of Connections" team to Gainesville to share their conservation insights and experience.

Our featured speakers offer a depth and richness of expertise in Amazonian conservation from across the region. Learn more about them below!

Haven't registered for the conference yet?

[Register here!](#) Please take a moment to register, and note that **registration closes Monday, February 16.**

MEET THE SPEAKERS

ANE ALENCAR

*Director of Science
Amazon Environmental Research
Institute (IPAM) (Brazil)*

**2026 Bacardi Family Eminent Scholar,
University of Florida**



Ane Alencar is the Science Director the Amazon Environmental Research Institute. For over three decades, she has studied fire dynamics, deforestation, and forest degradation in the Amazon and Cerrado, focusing on their links to climate change.

Ane has developed social technologies for environmental governance, earning recognition from Folha de S.Paulo and the Veja-se Award. She serves as member on the Amazon Scientific Panel, one of the coordinators of the Observatório do Clima network, and was named one of 14 global female leaders in Machine Learning and Earth Observation by the Radiant Earth Foundation. She is an alum of the TCD program, earning a PhD in Forest Resources and Conservation from the University of Florida.



AVECITA CHICCHÓN

Program Director

Andes-Amazon Initiative

Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation

Avecita Chicchón leads the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation's Andes-Amazon Initiative, which aims to secure the biodiversity and climatic function of the Amazon biome. Previously, she was the executive director of the Latin America program at the Wildlife Conservation Society, a program officer at the MacArthur Foundation, and the Peru program director at Conservation International.

Avecita has over 30 years of experience in natural resource use, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable development in Latin America and the Caribbean. Her program management has advanced conservation achievements across 15 countries in the region, including the Peruvian Amazon, Tierra de Fuego (Chile), and Cuban wetlands. She is an alum of the TCD program, earning a PhD in Social Anthropology from the University of Florida.

When can I see Avecita Chicchón at the conference?

Tuesday, February 24

11:00 am - 12:15 pm | Smathers Room 100

TUNTIK KATAN



Co-Founder

Ikiam Flourish (Ecuador)

Tuntiak Katan, deeply rooted in his Shuar community, is a staunch advocate for the conservation of the Amazon and the rights of its indigenous peoples. His academic background has expanded his commitment to biodiversity, indigenous knowledge, territory, and sustainable development.

Throughout his career, Tuntiak has played a crucial role in initiatives such as Sacred Basins in Peru and Ecuador and the Global Alliance of Territorial Communities, promoting climate, social, and economic justice. He is the creator and developer of the SHANDIA mechanism for direct access to climate financing for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities.

Recognized internationally, including with Italy's *Giovani Award*, Tuntiak persists in his defense of the sovereign rights of indigenous peoples over their territories and the ecosystem services they generate.

When can I see Tuntiak Katan at the conference?

Tuesday, February 24

9:30 - 11:00 am | Smathers Room 100



PASCAL MARTINEZ

*Senior Environmental Specialist (Forests
and Wildlife Thematic Lead)*

Global Environment Facility (GEF)

Pascal Martinez is a French national with extensive experience in the realm of international cooperation for sustainable development. Building on his strong background in forests, Pascal leads the Global Environment Facility's work on sustainable forest management -- notably, the Critical Forest Biomes Integrated

Program, the biggest GEF Program aiming at conserving the most important Primary Forests in the world including the Amazon.

Over the past 20 years, Pascal has developed activities in different areas of natural resources management and the environment, particularly in the following areas: sustainable forest management, biodiversity, agriculture, and climate change. Previously, he worked in the French ministries of environment and agriculture, French Embassies in Argentina and Chile, international organizations (FAO, ECLAC), and the private sector.

When can I see Pascal Martinez at the conference?

Tuesday, February 24

11:00 am - 12:15 pm | Smathers Room 100

[Register to attend](#)

A D D I T I O N A L S P E A K E R S

Monday, February 23

Discussion forums

1 - 5:30 pm | Smathers Room 100

**Insights from the Science Panel
for the Amazon**

Tuesday, February 24

Insights from workshops

1:30 - 5 pm | Smathers Room 100

**Sociobioeconomies and
conservation finance**

Marielos Peña-Claros

Wageningen University, Netherlands

Marianne Schmink

University of Florida

Simone Athayde

World Resources Institute

Silvia Futada

University of Florida

**40 years of conservation
science & practice**

Claudio Valladares Padua &

Suzana Padua

Institute for Ecological Research (IPÊ)

**Conservation in context of
rising crime & illegal activities**

Johanna Espín

University of Florida

Liliana Davalos

Stony Brook University

Hernan Alvarez

University of Florida

Conservation funding

Claudio Valladares Padua

Institute for Ecological Research (IPÊ)

Trent Blare

International Potato Center, Ecuador

**Collaborative management
centered on Indigenous
peoples and local communities**

Galo Zapata-Ríos

Wildlife Conservation Society,
Ecuador

João Campos

Instituto Juruá, Brazil

**Reshaping institutions for next
generation conservation
leaders**

Marlene Soriano (TBC)

Bolivian Institute for Forestry
Research, Inclusive Socioeconomic
Development Program

Maria Fernanda Checa

Nature Research Center, Pontifical
Catholic University of Ecuador

Maria Clara Van der Hammen

Humboldt Institute, Colombia

Maria DiGiano

Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation

Jean-Gaël Collomb

Wildlife Conservation Network

Innovations in the research process

Myrian Barboza

Ministry of the Environment, Brazil

Marisol Toledo

Gabriel René Moreno Autonomous

University, Bolivia

Indigenous rights and governance instruments

Johanna Espín

University of Florida

Luisa Bacca

Panamazon Institute, Colombia

Friday, February 27 *Conservation training clinics*

8:30 am - 4:30 pm | Holiday Inn University Center Ballroom

Planning and managing teams in complex systems

Mauricio Nuñez Regueiro – The
Nature Conservancy, Argentina

Women in conservation

Conservation storytelling for scientists and conservationists

Gabby Salazar – Independent
Consultant, Nat Geo Explorer,
University of Florida

Developing policy briefs

Cristina Nuñez Godoy – Catholic University of Salta, Argentina

Farah Carrasco Rueda – Field Museum, Chicago

Community engagement protocols

Carolina Soto – Humboldt Institute, Colombia

Camila Bernal Mattos – Independent Consultant

Renata Serra – University of Florida

Data management & archiving

Emilio Bruna – University of Florida

Polarization & difficult conversations

Jonathan Dain – University of Florida

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Sunday, February 22

- **5 - 8 pm** | Cypress & Grove Brewery | Casual welcome social (*at own cost*)

Monday, February 23

- **1 - 5:30 pm** | Smathers Room 100 | Discussion forums
- **7 - 9 pm** | Earl and Christy Powell University House | Opening reception

Tuesday, February 24

- **8:30 am - 12 pm** | Smathers Room 100 | Power of Connections project
- **1:30 - 5 pm** | Smathers Room 100 | Plenary talks

- **5 - 7 pm** | Smathers Room 100 | Poster session

Wednesday, February 25

- *Closed sessions for The Power of Connections Amazon Summit, by invitation only*

Thursday, February 26

- *Closed sessions for The Power of Connections Amazon Summit, by invitation only*
- **6 pm** | First Magnitude Brewery | Casual farewell social (*at own cost*)

Friday, February 27

- **8:30 am - 4:30 pm** | Holiday Inn University Center Ballroom | Conservation training clinics

Please note that events, topics, and speakers may be subject to change.

[Register to attend](#)

CONFERENCE SPONSORS:

UF Tropical Conservation and Development Program

UF Center for Latin American Studies

UF IFAS School of Forest, Fisheries, and Geomatics Sciences

Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation

UF Biodiversity Institute

Florida Climate Institute

UF Office of Research
UF School of Natural Resources and Environment
UF Dept. of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation
UF Dept. of Anthropology
UF Dept. of Sociology and Criminology & Law
UF International Center
