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## **South American Agro-forestry Specialist to Work with Upstate Forever**

### ***Carlos Cortes of Colombia to assist local group for five weeks as Climate Change Fellow***

(Greenville, SC) –Colombian agro-forester Carlos Alfredo Cortes will travel to the United States on a Climate Change Fellowship offered by Partners of the Americas through the Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs from March 27 until May 5. During his Fellowship, Cortes will work at Upstate Forever, a nonprofit organization specializing in the promotion of land conservation, air and water quality protection, and sustainable development in the Upstate region of South Carolina. One of just 10 Fellows chosen this spring, Cortes will represent Tumaco, one of the regions in Colombia most affected by climate change.

Cortes was chosen by representatives of the US Embassy in Colombia in conjunction with members of Partners of the Americas on the basis of his work with the Community Council of Union Rio Rosario. In his current work in Colombia, Cortes designs strategies for the sustainable management of natural resources and agro-ecosystems. In his training as an agro-forestry engineer, he has worked extensively with several community councils and local indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities in developing rural extension projects.

While in the United States, Cortes will research the carbon sequestration potential of southeastern forests and carbon offset bank models to develop a structure for a potential Upstate-based carbon offset bank. Such a program would improve local air quality and reduce local climate change emissions while retaining financial resources in our region. From

May 2-5, Cortes will also participate in the US Department of State's Professional Fellows Congress in Washington D.C.

"We are thrilled to have the opportunity to work with Carlos as a part of this partnership," said John Tynan, Upstate Forever's Clean Air and Water Program Co-Director. "He brings professional expertise on the benefits of protecting forestland for carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat, water quality, and other benefits. In addition, he has a strong interest in and commitment to learning more about how community-based organizations implement programs and policies to advance their goals. We look forward to the information exchange and cultural learning that both our staff and Carlos will gain from this experience."

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**Upstate Forever** is a nonprofit, membership-based organization promoting sensible growth and the protection of special places in the Upstate region of South Carolina. Our three program areas are Land Trust, Sustainable Communities, and Clean Air and Water. Founded in 1998, **Upstate Forever** now has nearly 2,000 members, two offices, and a staff of 20. For more information, see [www.upstateforever.org](http://www.upstateforever.org).

**The Climate Change Fellows Program** seeks to build bilateral relationships and capacities between climate change institutions in the US and Colombia. In 2011, 44 Fellows, evenly representing both Colombia and the US, will travel to their respective countries to exchange knowledge through their work and experiences. The Climate Change Fellows are a first step to constructing a global network of climate change institutions in the Americas.

**Partners of the Americas** is an international grassroots network that connects volunteers, institutions, and communities to serve and to change lives. Inspired by President Kennedy, today Partners is one of the largest volunteer-based organizations in the Western Hemisphere engaged in social, economic and cultural development. By linking Latin America and the Caribbean with counterparts in the United States, Partners acts in long term, focused partnership with the people and places of the Americas. For more information, visit [www.partners.net](http://www.partners.net).

**The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA)** sponsors exchange programs and activities for students, educators, artists, athletes and professionals in many fields in the United States and in more than 160 around the world. Alumni of ECA exchange programs comprise more than one million people, including more than 40 Nobel Laureates and more than 365 current or former heads of state and government. The Climate Change Fellows Program is among the Department's Professional Exchanges. For more information, visit <http://exchanges.state.gov/citizens/profs.html>.