

A Far Away Forest

Students learn about conservation in Costa Rica

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(http://cafnrnews.com/?attachment_id=24421)

Costa Rican forester Rolando Camacho (left) describes the composition of tree species to the MU ... Expand ▶

Three students from the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources spent a portion of their summer expanding their knowledge of forestry in Costa Rica.

The three students were chosen through a selection process involving an essay comparing temperate forest resources in Missouri with tropical resources in Costa Rica. The trip was paid for the students by a grant from the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, a division of the USDA. The project, "Internationalization of Forestry Education, Research and Extension: U.S.-Costa Rica Cooperation," is led by Francisco X. Aguilar, assistant professor of forestry.

The students attending were Sean McWay, senior in forestry; Nina Wajrowski, junior in fisheries and wildlife; and Daniel Berger, senior in forestry.

"This program was established in hopes of internationalizing our forestry program," Aguilar said. "Forest resources are diverse and although we can talk about it in class, it is better to experience them first-hand. It is also good to learn about how people interact with forests and the land in other nations. Only by immersing in another culture one can appreciate the differences and commonalities between nations. I hope the experience will help our students to see how diverse our world is, how rich tropical forests are,

and hopefully spark some new curiosity in them about seeing the world.”



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This is the second summer of the three-year grant.

Students were stationed at EARTH University in Costa Rica for four weeks completing two courses: Making Agriculture Sustainable, and Challenges and Alternatives: Carbon, Climate and Livelihoods in Tropical Agro-Forestry Systems.

After four weeks at EARTH University, the students joined MU faculty member Bill Allen, assistant professor of science journalism; a representative from Lincoln University, Steven Kirk; and the executive director of the Missouri Forest Products Association, Brian Brookshire; to visit various projects highlighting sustainable forestry and other aspects of land management in Costa Rica.

“Like anyone who studies abroad, your mind opens to how the rest of the world feels, works and thinks,” Allen said. “These students met fellow students from all over the world who will one day be their professional colleagues.”



http://cafnrnews.com/?attachment_id=24423“My experiences in Costa Rica really opened my eyes to vital aspects of conservation that I either didn’t have a full understanding of or had never even thought of

before,” McWay said. “I think, regardless of what I end up doing, the worldly perspective on natural resource management and conservation that I have started to develop will give me understanding and skills that I never would have had otherwise.”

Activities for this project also include a Scientist Exchange Program and a Doctoral Student International Travel Allowance, which are reserved for faculty and other researchers at MU and the Agronomic Center for Tropical Studies.

[Learn more about the grant here. \(http://www.reeis.usda.gov/web/crisprojectpages/0225809-internationalization-of-forestry-education-research-and-extension-us-costa-rica-cooperation.html\)](http://www.reeis.usda.gov/web/crisprojectpages/0225809-internationalization-of-forestry-education-research-and-extension-us-costa-rica-cooperation.html)

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