

Ernst & Young Earthwatch Ambassadors Travel to Brazil and Costa Rica to Help Local Businesses with Environmentally and Economically Sustainable Practices

This year Ernst & Young, in conjunction with the Earthwatch Institute, is sending 30 volunteers on skills-based expeditions to Brazil and Costa Rica to conduct field research and recommend strategies for implementing environmentally and economically sustainable practices to local businesses.

This marks the fourth consecutive year Ernst & Young has sent volunteers on one-week expeditions with Earthwatch Institute, an organization that engages people worldwide in scientific field research. This is the second year the program has visited Brazil and the fourth year in Costa Rica. The program has proven so successful that it has been replicated in Ernst & Young's EMEIA Area (Europe, the Middle East, India and Africa). In August 2012, it will launch in APAC (the Asia-Pacific Area). And in Japan, small groups of professionals are now participating in short-duration projects.

"As one of the highest growth emerging markets and home to the Atlantic Forest, Brazil is poised for robust environmental innovation. Our work with Earthwatch helps local business and entrepreneurs develop practices that will benefit their bottom line," said Deborah Holmes, Americas Director of Corporate Responsibility for Ernst & Young. "Business communities continue to become more connected across geographies and our Earthwatch Ambassadors are gaining global exposure in these increasingly important regions while making a difference in the local communities."

Each of the three expedition teams is comprised of 10 Ernst & Young member firm employees from the US, Canada, Israel, Mexico, Central America and South America. In Brazil, the volunteers work alongside scientific researchers to record and measure data on tree species, collect water samples and track mammals in the Atlantic Forest, a biodiversity hotspot and one of the world's most threatened forests. Their research helps Earthwatch scientists understand which attributes are most important to manage the forest in the face of climate change. Additionally, the ambassadors work closely with an ecotourism cooperative to help them improve profitability.

In Costa Rica, the volunteers work with a 2,600 member coffee farming co-operative. Ernst & Young member firm employees collect data alongside Earthwatch scientists to help understand the practices that lead to more sustainable production of coffee. The volunteers also assist the cooperative with defining effective strategies for communicating with their key stakeholders, including cooperative members, employees, local and international customers and the local community.

"We're seeing a growing interest in this type of program from other organizations and are thrilled that the Ernst & Young program is expanding across the globe. It's a testament to the organization's commitment and to the power of employing this model of field research and skills-based volunteering to make a difference on the ground," said Ed Wilson, President and CEO of Earthwatch. "It's inspiring to see our corporate volunteers bring their knowledge, passion and experience to help us improve scientific understanding and local businesses in the communities in which we operate."

Earthwatch Ambassadors' focus on the environment and sustainability doesn't end when they return to Ernst & Young. Participants continue to integrate their experiences and incorporate environmental awareness into their daily behaviors and careers, whether training colleagues on business practices, helping future Earthwatch Ambassadors with applications, or becoming involved with the organization's Climate Change and Sustainability Services (CCaSS) work. Earthwatch Ambassadors are often active in the communities in which they live and volunteer with local nonprofit organizations.

Ernst & Young firms selected the 2012 Earthwatch Ambassadors based on their performance, as well as enthusiasm and commitment to the environment, both personally and professionally. To learn more about Ernst & Young's Earthwatch expeditions and view a video recap of a past expedition, go to: <http://www.ey.com/US/en/About-us/Corporate-Responsibility/CR---Environmental-sustainability>
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