



# Reserva Natural La Pedregoza

Asociación Red Colombiana de Reservas Naturales de la Sociedad Civil

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For Immediate Release – January 24, 2011

Press Release

## Canadian Family Creates Natural Reserve in Colombia

**Bogota** - Three members of a Canadian family from Edmonton have successfully created a natural reserve in the Orinoco River basin of Colombia. The reserve, known in Spanish as the **Reserva Natural La Pedregoza**, is located some 57 km from the Orinoco port city of Puerto Carreño in the eastern Colombian department or state of Vichada. The reserve is some 10 square kilometers in size and features 3 old growth inundation and gallery forests along the banks of the *Rio el Bita* river.

*Dexter Dombro*, a former Alberta lawyer, his wife *Dr. Kochurani Dombro*, an Edmonton dentist, and their eldest son *Dilmun Dombro*, a science student, have been engaged for the past 3 years in tropical tree afforestation and reforestation efforts in the Orinoco River basin of Colombia. “When the opportunity presented itself to conserve and protect this very special area, we put our money where our mouths are!” said Dexter Dombro, “It seemed completely self-evident that this was the right thing to do.”

Colombian law allows private people to acquire land and to then apply to have it declared a protected area. The Colombian agency entrusted with this is called Resnatur. Resnatur has formally accredited the **Reserva Natural La Pedregoza** as a member of the Colombian Network Association of Civil Society Natural Reserves (*Asociación Red Colombiano de Reservas Naturales de la Sociedad Civil*). *Lourdes Peñuela Recio*, V.P. of the Green Horizon Foundation (*Fundación Horizonte Verde*) of Colombia has welcomed this natural reserve among protected areas in what is called the Orinoco node.

The main objective of the **Reserva Natural La Pedregoza** is the conservation and preservation of Orinoco River basin flora and fauna. Colombia is estimated to have up to 8% of the planet’s biodiversity within its borders, making it hugely important. The natural reserve helps protect that biodiversity with three key programs: 1. the collection, germination and propagation of native tree species, many of which were recklessly logged in the past, 2. a dedicated large river turtle rescue effort with an endangered river turtle egg hatchery and release program, and 3. the construction of an Interpretive Centre to educate locals and international visitors alike on the importance of the inundation and gallery forests in the Orinoco River basin.

*Fernando Trujillo*, Ph.D., managing director of the renowned Omacha Foundation (*Fundación Omacha*), stated: “La Pedregoza is important, because it adds to the protected corridor for endangered wildlife travelling to and from the El Tuparro National Park (*Parque Nacional Natural El Tuparro*). In addition, their native tree program will help expand habitat for endangered wildlife.” *Dr. Debra Davidson* of the University of Alberta’s *Faculty of Agricultural, Life & Environmental Sciences* has visited **Reserva Natural La Pedregoza** and was one of the instigators for the U of A to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Dombro family for U of A researchers to use the natural reserve as a research area.

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