

An opportunity we can't afford to waste

There are opportunities to grow new crops where trees once stood that can be harvested for agriculture. Trees in agricultural landscapes could improve soil moisture and fertility, and boost food production. And responsible tourism and other services can be developed as part of the rehabilitation mix. All of these forms of sustainable enterprise can inject new income and new life into threatened communities, relieving poverty and funding improvements in education.

The environmental rewards of landscape rehabilitation are huge. The economic rewards are just as great. It has been estimated that the restoration of 150 million hectares of former forest land around the world – as promised by the Bonn Challenge – would pump US\$ 85 billion a year into national and global economies.

It's an opportunity we can't afford to waste.

Interested in joining the GPFLR?

Joining the Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration involves actively linking restoration initiatives to the partnership and participating in shared learning. Prospective partners could contribute to this global effort in a variety of ways, for example:

- Hosting a Bonn Challenge pledging or GPFLR knowledge or other event.
- Supporting specific technical innovations, such as the linkage of new plans for integrated watershed management with the implementation of forest and landscape restoration.
- Working with IUCN to extend Partner know-how to other areas and industries, and globally.
- Participating in the upcoming GPFLR online learning module on national assessments of restoration and carbon mitigation potential.
- Introducing or orienting a national or industrial policy, or initiating a new field or business programme aligned with the forest and landscape restoration approach.

By joining the partnership prospective partners would enjoy a range of rewards, including:

- Earning well-deserved distinction and recognition, with many opportunities to highlight achievements within the partnership and with a global audience.
- Having access to the latest technical and policy information and tools related to restoration of degraded and deforested lands.
- Contributing to a growing community of experts across sectors and countries.

We would be very pleased to others to join us in making a difference in the important work of forest and landscape restoration and to be recognized as as leaders for their contributions.

After Restoration, Loess Plateau, China 2009
(Photo: John Liu)



The Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration (GPFLR)

For more information:

For more information on GPFLR, Forest Landscape Restoration and the Bonn Challenge:

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What is the GPFLR?

The Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration (GPFLR) is a worldwide network of Forest and Landscape Restoration (FLR) practitioners and supporters working from grassroots level upwards to spread best practice and political awareness of restoration and its powerful benefits. It is coordinated by a secretariat hosted at IUCN.

Deforestation and the degradation of landscapes is a global phenomenon, and it demands a global response. The Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration is a worldwide network that unites influential governments, major UN and non-governmental organizations, business and individuals with a common cause.

The GPFLR builds support for restoration with decision-makers and opinion-formers at both local and international level, and influences legal, political and institutional frameworks to support FLR.

FLR is not a fixed science or discipline: it is a fluid, fertile practice that pulls in expertise from many different fields. The GPFLR's Learning Network is based on the principle that ideas transform landscapes; it connects partners and collaborators from diverse parts of the world in a community of practice that allows new ideas and solutions to be freely exchanged.

The Learning Network is vital to the sharing of FLR experience from around the world, and to the achievement of milestones such as the Bonn Challenge target to restore 150 million hectares of degraded and deforested land by 2020. That experience includes helping to bring about breakthrough projects and undertakings in settings as diverse as Brazil, China, Indonesia, North Korea, Rwanda, and the US.

By working from the ground up, GPFLR partners have reinforced each other's efforts, rather than competed with them. Together they have shifted international dialogue and raised the political consciousness of landscape restoration. Through high-level events and cutting-edge analysis, the Partnership has produced and communicated the evidence of the kind of transformations that restored landscapes can bring about in ecosystems and communities.

What is forest and landscape restoration?

Forest and landscape restoration turns barren or degraded areas of land into healthy, fertile, working landscapes where local communities, ecosystems and other stakeholders can cohabit, sustainably. To be successful, it needs to involve everyone with a stake in the landscape, to design the right solutions and build lasting relationships.

Forest and landscape restoration (FLR) is not just about trees. Trying to put the forest back the way it was is one possible restoration strategy, but there are many others that sometimes have to be woven together to tailor a solution that's right for the setting and for all those with a stake in the forest.

The goal, in each case, is to revitalize the landscape so that it can meet the needs of people and the natural environment, sustainably.

The benefits of FLR can be felt immediately, through job creation and carbon sequestration. But there is no magical, one-size-fits-all blueprint. A restored landscape can accommodate a mosaic of different land uses, such as agriculture, protected wildlife reserves, ecological corridors, regenerated forests, managed plantations, agroforestry systems and river or lakeside plantings to protect waterways.

FLR only works on a scale that can accommodate a balanced package of forest functions. Only when large areas of landscape are treated as a whole can different interests be reconciled and issues such as biodiversity conservation and watershed management be tackled in a coordinated way. But the size and nature of the landscape can only be determined locally; it is whatever makes sense for generating the benefits that people need and for improving the integrity of the ecosystems.

Although the benefits can be felt immediately, FLR is not a short-term fix, either. It is a long-term solution requiring the commitment of communities, companies, landowners, administrators and politicians. Simply planting trees and crossing fingers doesn't work. The needs of forest stakeholders change over time, and solutions have to be adaptable and flexible enough to channel those needs towards sustainable practices that benefit all in the long-term.

The key principles of FLR are that:

- Decisions about what to restore and where are taken at the level of the whole landscape, not just individual bits and pieces. Working across a wider context allows trade-offs to be made between conflicting interests, and the potential for future disputes minimised.
- Local stakeholders are actively engaged in the decision-making, collaboration and implementation of the solution; inclusion of the local community is vital.
- The landscape is restored and managed not only to increase forest cover but to provide an agreed balance of ecosystem services and goods.
- A wide range of restoration strategies are considered, from managed natural regeneration to tree planting.
- Monitoring, learning and adaptation take place continuously.

Why restore degraded and deforested lands?

For economic reasons as well as the most pressing environmental ones, we should commit ourselves to forest and landscape restoration. Putting back lost forests and reviving landscapes can restore their vital functions, cool the planet, protect wildlife and rescue lives, sustainably and economically.

Some people might ask, isn't it enough to simply put the brakes on deforestation? Do we also need to actively restore cleared landscapes?

The damage has been done – but it can be reversed.

Everyone knows that deforestation has accelerated global warming; that having fewer trees and less forest has left more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, and left our planet more exposed to the sun. Regenerating and revitalizing forests as part of landscape restoration projects would give us back some of that capacity to sequester carbon and slow down climate change. But there are plenty of other reasons why we need to start reversing the spiral of loss and degradation. Healthy, fertile landscapes provide homes for wildlife and human life, providing food, clean water and materials for shelter. Sustainably cultivated and farmed woodlands yield biofuel and raw products that can be worked or processed for trade, stimulating local industry and creating jobs.

After Restoration, Loess Plateau, China 2009
(Photo: John Liu)

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