



STEM Teacher Training in a Tropical Forest: US Science Teachers Invited to Apply for the 2016 ECO Classroom Trip to Costa Rica

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Northrop Grumman Foundation and Conservation International call for applications from science teachers for the fifth annual ECO Classroom professional development program

FALLS CHURCH, Va., Feb. 10, 2016 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- In their continuing effort to help teachers develop the next generation of scientists, the Northrop Grumman Foundation and Conservation International (CI) announced that applications for the 2016 ECO Classroom experience are now being accepted through April 8, 2016. Four teams of four teachers will be funded to join scientists in Costa Rica from July 17-30 to conduct fieldwork in a tropical forest.

To apply to the ECO Classroom program and to learn more, please visit: <http://www.northropgrumman.com/CorporateResponsibility/CorporateCitizenship/Education/ECOCClassroom/Pages/HowToApply.aspx>

ECO Classroom, in its fifth year, is a unique and innovative nationwide professional development program designed for public school science teachers from grades 6 - 12. It was created by the Northrop Grumman Foundation in collaboration with CI. ECO Classroom offers teachers supplemental tools and real-world experiences to inspire students to pursue science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) related careers.

The ECO Classroom program brings groups of public school teachers from across the United States to CI's [Tropical Ecology Assessment and Monitoring \(TEAM\) Network](#) Volcan Barva site in Braulio Carrillo National Park, in Costa Rica. Throughout the two week program, teachers live and work at the La Selva Biological Research Station where they learn field data collection techniques to measure plant and animal biodiversity as well as changes in climate and land use using TEAM scientific protocols. TEAM has been leading the field of tropical species monitoring with its network of camera traps, established in tropical sites around the world, including Volcan Barva. This research led to a TEAM study, [recently published in PLOS Biology](#), revealing that wildlife biodiversity in tropical forest protected areas is faring better than previously thought. Teachers selected for the program will be able to draw upon this expertise as they work on their own inquiry-based group projects.

"Going to La Selva was such a wonderful experience for me," said Robin Rumery, a former participant in the program. "I use the information and activities from Costa Rica in my lessons as often as I can and also received a grant for my very own camera traps. The students loved them. We have been doing diversity studies on the wet pine savanna behind our school for both species richness and species evenness." Kirby Welsh, a participant in the program this past year, had this to say about her experience, "This is an amazing opportunity and the best professional development program I've ever experienced."

It is widely acknowledged among educators and policymakers that insufficient numbers of students are entering into STEM fields. A method to address this issue and emphasize environmental stewardship is to motivate educators to engage students in the sciences and to bring unique learning opportunities into their classrooms with real-world curricula and hands-on experiences, such as ECO Classroom.

After the 2015 two week expedition, 16 ECO Classroom teachers from across the U.S. returned to their schools with an in-depth understanding of the interrelationship between biodiversity, climate change and human activities, and were better equipped with new techniques and resources to enhance their classroom teaching. Sixty-four teachers from 13 different states have already participated in the program and shared what they learned with nearly 24,000 students.

Since 1987, Conservation International has been working to improve human well-being through the care of nature. With the guiding principle that nature doesn't need people, but people need nature for food, water, health and livelihoods—CI works with more than 1,000 partners around the world to ensure a healthy, more prosperous planet that supports the well-being of people. [Learn more about CI](#) and the "[Nature Is Speaking](#)" campaign, and follow CI's work on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [YouTube](#).

Northrop Grumman and the Northrop Grumman foundation are committed to expanding and enhancing the pipeline of diverse, talented STEM students globally. They provide funding to sustainable STEM programs that span from preschool to high school and through collegiate levels, with a major emphasis on middle school students and teachers. In 2015, Northrop Grumman and the Northrop Grumman Foundation continued education outreach efforts by contributing more than \$17 million to diverse STEM-related groups such as the Air Force Association (CyberPatriot), Conservation International (ECO Classroom), the REC Foundation (VEX Robotics), National Science Teachers Association and the National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering. For more information, please visit www.northropgrumman.com/foundation.

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