

Forest land in the Adjuntas area being set aside for conservation

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Nearly 1,000 acres of forest in the Adjuntas area is being set aside for conservation in an effort to protect endangered species, the director of the environmental group Casa Pueblo, Alexis Massol, announced Friday.

Massol said the area, to be known as Olimpia Forest, is made up chiefly of primary forest and serves as a refuge for the Puerto Rican forest hawk and for the Sierra falcon. Both are on the endangered species list.

"This is going to be the center of the ecological corridor that joins Guilarte Forest with the People's Forest. Moreover, the Río Grande de Arcibo, which supplies water to 1.2 million people, starts in these lands," Massol said.

The environmentalist said that the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources granted 750 acres, Casa Pueblo ceded 150 acres and a private citizen added 100 acres.

The DNER recently announced its first purchases using a new \$20 million land acquisition trust fund. Several of the areas are in the Adjuntas-Utuado region.

Massol said the Olimpia Forest designation is "one of great importance to the environmental conservation plan since it is the central part of the largest biological corridor in the central zone of the island."

He added that the forest will be managed by Casa Pueblo and maintenance will be done by approximately 50 volunteers from Adjuntas, who will make sure that human exposure to the area is limited.

The forest is located at 3,200 feet above sea level and is mainly a primary forest, he said, while the lowest level is a secondary forest in recuperation. "It has been agreed that a flora and fauna

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The community group Casa Pueblo will manage a new 1,000-acre forest reserve in the Adjuntas area, organization chief Alexis Massol said Friday.

inventory will be started. Perhaps a botanical garden could be created," Massol said.

About 300 people, including biologists, environmentalists and Casa Pueblo members, participated Friday in an assembly.

The group also celebrated an international *fiesta*, where Argentine and Uruguayan *payadores* performed, as well as the Grupo Mapeyé and the Adjuntas Folklore ballet.

Massol, an engineer and winner of the Goldman environmental prize, founded Casa Pueblo 23 years in an effort to promote alternative development to protect the environment, and affirm human values, through individual initiative and volunteer participation.