

Happy Holidays from Rainforest Relief

Thank you for your membership and support.

Please consider a gift to Rainforest Relief this holiday season.

OR... present a gift membership to a friend or loved one.

For a donation of \$25 or more, the new member of your choice will receive a card notifying them of your gift, as well as receiving our RAINDROPS newsletter.

My Name is: _____ Present a gift membership in my name to: _____

Address: _____ Name: _____

_____ Address: _____

Phone: _____ Phone: _____

THANK YOU!

Phone: _____

Mail to: Rainforest Relief • PO Box 150566 • Brooklyn, NY 11215 • For membership info call: (212) 879-2118

Rainforest Relief's wish list...

As always, we need your support to continue to spare the rainforests from destructive logging and clearing for export agriculture. Some of our most valuable contributions come in the form of in-kind donations of goods and services. To that end, below is a wish list for those who may be looking to make in-kind donations.

- Desktop copier (to help reduce our copying costs)
- High-resolution slide scanning and slide duplication
- Slide projectors (for our educational presentations)
- Printing services (for brochures and publications)
- 100% recycled, tree-free, or salvaged paper



Rainforest Relief

P.O. Box 150566 • Brooklyn, NY 11215

(718) 398-3760 • relief@igc.org

www.enviroweb.org/rainrelief



Ventor, New Jersey Chooses Certified Wood

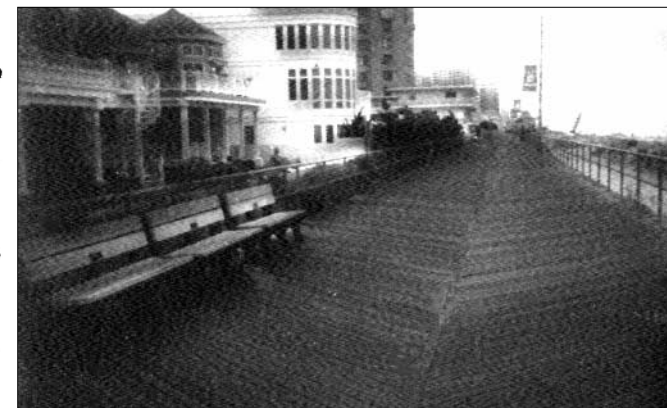
In May of this year we became aware of the impending use of tropical hardwoods by Ventor, NJ to repair their two-mile-long coastal boardwalk.

Within two weeks we had sent a letter to the mayor and secured a meeting June 27 with him and various members of the City Council and the City Administrator. We also contacted Georgina Shanley who was one of the key people alongside whom we successfully fought it out in Ocean City in 1995-6.

Over the next month, in what would be a very convoluted campaign, Ventor officials vacillated between being open to plastic lumber, to denial and back again.

At the initial meeting, the mayor claimed that he was not opposed to using "synthetics" – that is, the recycled plastic lumber (RPL) we were advocating. In fact, Trex was included in the original bid specs. At the same meeting, however, I was verbally attacked by Ventor's City Engineer because I had brought samples of TriMax, a structural RPL, to show officials.

Shortly after the meeting, we began distributing postcards and enlisting the support of area businesses and residents.



The Ventor, NJ boardwalk will be repaired with certified wood.

Die-hards attended City Council meetings to voice opposition to rainforest wood use and suggest RPL.

In the end, the disparity in the positions of Rainforest Relief and the local Friends of the Rainforest was tested. At the City Council meeting on July 18, Ventor officials backed away from their stated support of RPL and announced their intention to demand Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified wood from Timber Holdings, the chosen supplier. This option allowed them to proceed without rebidding, whereas the use of RPL would have necessitated going out to bid once again.

Officials voiced concerns about using RPL which they felt was untested for boardwalks. The fact that Polywood and TriMax have been used by the US Army Corps of Engineers for vehicular bridges on military bases and that the world's largest all-recycled-plastic pier is nearby in the Bronx and that Belmar and Spring Lake, NJ have been using Trex (which we don't recommend) for their boardwalks for 5 years, escaped Ventor officials.

Part of Ventor's reality is that their boardwalk is contiguous with Atlantic City's, just to the north. Atlantic City has been using uncertified rainforest wood since 1988.

Ultimately, Ventor officials' vote to use certified tropical wood was a victory of sorts in that, at the very least, no wood from the black market, cut from remote pristine areas will be used. But all ipê imported into the US is from old growth forests, whether or not there's a legal concession to cut.

The fact that FSC-accredited certified operations in the rainforest adhere to a strict management plan, practice lower-impact logging and don't buy from the black market, doesn't negate the fact that logging in any tropical forest reduces biodiversity – that is, wipes out species.

Ventor, NJ *continued on page 5*

New York City Bill Moving, but Slowly

At the Contracts Committee hearing on June 13, Joan Roney and Tim Keating testified at the first hearing for the new version of the wood bill moving through the New York City Council. The bill will mandate that the City use only “environmentally preferable” materials when seeking products typically made of wood. “Environmentally preferable” is defined as recycled materials, bio-based materials (those made from agricultural residues), salvaged materials and FSC-certified wood.

The current hierarchy spelled out in the bill language was a change that was made last year after the first round of hearings – a change we opposed. The original hierarchy called for the use of recycled and bio-based first with FSC-accredited certified wood as a last resort, which is more in keeping with our position. The bill, however, is still a strong measure that will end some use of wood from endangered forests.

But the bill in its current form may not put an end to the use of tropical hardwoods which make up the vast majority of wood from endangered forests the City uses.

That’s because there’s an exemption in the language for when FSC-certified wood costs more than 15% above the cost of uncertified wood.

We’re currently trying to close this loophole by inserting language that would bar the City from using wood that has been illegally logged. If we can get this clause in it may throw up enough barriers that make the use of tropical wood so difficult that City agencies seek alternatives.

We hope to have introduced this language at the next hearing of the Contracts Committee. ♪

What You Can Do: Please call your City Council member and tell them to support Intro-108-A and to make sure the bill addresses the massive and continuing use of tropical hardwoods by the City. Call (212) 788-7100 or visit www.council.nyc.ny.us to find your City Council person.



The rainforest wood decking of the Brooklyn Bridge

Oxy Comes Up Dry – and Notorious

For thousands of years, the U’wa – a peaceful indigenous community of 5,000 people – have lived in the cloud forests of northeast Colombia, protecting their land and culture from outside encroachment. U’wa culture remains one of the least influenced by Western ways in Latin America. Their traditions, economy, religion, and political system rely on their relationship to the land. Today, as in the past, the land and its ecological health are fundamental for the continuation of the U’wa’s collective well being.

For years, Rainforest Relief joined with other groups across the country to protest the impending drilling for oil by Occidental Petroleum (Oxy) on U’wa customary and owned land – a project condemned by environmental and human rights groups around the world.

The U’wa had non-violently resisted Oxy’s project since the company was granted drilling rights by the Colombian government in 1992 and had stated that they were willing to die if necessary to stop the drilling. Oxy began construction of its first drill site, known as Gibraltar 1, in early 2000. This project had already led to a dramatic increase in human rights violations and environmental destruction. In the ensuing year, the U’wa homeland had become heavily militarized. The U’wa warned that unless the project was canceled, it would only bring further violence, environmental and cultural destruction, oil spills from guerrilla bombings and deforestation from new access roads.

Occidental began drilling in 2001, amid statements by the U’wa that they would pray to “hide” the oil – the blood of Mother Earth – from Oxy’s drills.

Having drilled for months and come up dry, in late 2001 Oxy announced that it was pulling out of the project.

While this was seen as a clear victory, the Colombian state-owned oil company recently began test drilling on the site of the Oxy project.

Oil is only one of the battles facing the U’wa and other indigenous people living in Colombia. Plan Colombia, supported largely by the lobbying efforts of Oxy and three major weapons manufacturers in the northeast – General Dynamics, Sikorsky Aircraft and Textron – continues to pour vast sums of US taxpayer money earmarked for militarization into the area. These companies and others are profiting at the expense of Colombians, such as the U’wa. The U’wa have been calling on US citizens to help

Oxy Oil *continued on page 3*

Ventor, NJ *continued from page 1*

Rainforest Relief’s position is that we will not campaign against entities that use FSC-accredited certified wood. This is a compromise that takes into account the political reality of the campaigning climate and our extremely limited resources.

We were disappointed by Ventor’s decision not to go with RPL. In fact, officials lambasted me for not applauding their announcement and for voicing my disappointment. They had thought there would be a celebration. But the reality is that rainforests will be cut for Ventor’s boardwalk, when this could have been avoided.

We have congratulated ourselves in the past when entities have gone certified after having ordered uncertified. We have always known that certified is a compromise in most cases. But, given the 11th-hour nature of many of our campaigns, including Ventor, getting them to go certified is orders of magnitude better than if we hadn’t stepped in.

The Ventor campaign served to convince us more clearly that certified is a compromise and that RPL is the only real victory.

It also served to show us that we need to invest more heavily in a proactive approach to the rainforest wood boardwalk problem. We were shown that in order to truly win in places like Ventor, there needs to be a model RPL boardwalk in the Northeast to which to point.

Soon after the Ventor “victory” we began contacting officials in Belmar, Point Pleasant, Asbury Park and Long Branch. Ultimately, Rainforest Relief will facilitate the use of structural RPL in one of these towns.

Since this push Belmar staff, who have been using Trex for years, agreed to test some Polywood, which is a structural RPL, in a section of sand-contact boardwalk. Positive meetings have occurred in Asbury Park and Atlantic City.

It’s a different way of working for us. Rather than coming in with a stick when folks have already decided to do the wrong thing, we are playing a proactive role, helping communities reduce maintenance costs and lawsuits over the long term.

Within the next two years Rainforest Relief will see a structural recycled plastic lumber boardwalk in the region.

Any support you could lend would go a long way towards stopping the use of rainforest woods for boardwalks. ♪



The Critical Mass Crew joins us to protest the city’s rainforest wood use.

The Underground *continued from page 3*

Tube hoisted a dancer into the air like some kind of offering, lightening and a deafening burst of thunder split the day. The entire group, cyclists and those on foot, converged and went into a frenzy as drummers pounded rhythms on buckets and djembes and foot-deep puddles filled the park in minutes of the torrential downpour.

Bikes were locked in large clumps and everyone descended underground for a surprise subway party on the Brooklyn-bound 4 train traveling on a track laden with rainforest wood logged from Africa. A couple people passed out hundreds of drumsticks as party favors and the subway platform became a drum as did the train when nearly four hundred sopping wet people packed into the cars.

We took the train to Prospect Hill Park. The skies cleared by the time we exited from the Grand Army Plaza stop. Surrounded by blocks of cops, the procession continued on into a large playground in the park.

RR activists, lit by the flames of torches, gave a teach-in on rainforest issues, making sure that each person had a flyer explaining the Metropolitan Transit Authority’s usage of African rainforest wood for track ties and listing the phone numbers of relevant City officials.

Late into the night the protest party raged, and the festive crowd, newly informed on rainforest issues, continued to dance to the beat of the drummers. ♪



Party/protest goes show their wild side to the MTA.

Notes from the Underground:

Days of Action Targeting MTA's Use of Rainforest Wood

Over two hundred cyclists, skaters and rollerbladers gathered at Manhattan's Union Square Park last May for the 2nd Annual "Dead Rainforest Tour". The mass action seeks to highlight areas of the City where rainforest wood is being used and was organized in conjunction with the cycling event called Critical Mass in which, on the last Friday of each month, urban alternative transportation enthusiasts worldwide take to the streets in large numbers.

As the Critical Mass participants began their ride other activists remained at the park to ready an impromptu stage and finalize a sequence of performances. At 8:30pm, an hour after the Critical Mass participants departed, 150 more people arrived on foot at Union Square carrying noisemakers, drums and green gifts, ready for a rainforest party.

Fire-dancers juggled flames, and Dance Tube, a NYC-based body movement troupe, waived large palm fronds through the air in an interpretive ritual.

A wall of painted banners decorated the stage, forming a backdrop and framing a message for the performances. The largest depicted an image of silhouetted people having a party on a 4 train along with the caption, "Hey MTA! Ride the Love Train: Don't Buy Rainforest Wood!" Other banners included images of an indigenous person, exotic birds and tropical vegetation.

Just as the first lines of the Critical Mass participants returned back to the park and the members of Dance

The Underground *continued on page 5*



The "Ride the Love Train" banner was a huge hit.

Rainforest Relief Visits Maine Colleges During Spring Speaking Tour

Tim Keating, RR's director, traveled to Maine for a tour of the state's east coast colleges. Flying into Portland, Tim was met by Jean Gulnick and Mark Green, who hosted Tim at their house. Taking the ferry to Bar Harbor, Tim presented at College of the Atlantic, thanks to Jamie, Arber, Crystal and Andrew. Next came Bates College. Thanks so much to Jason Wentworth, who hosted Tim and organized the presentation. Then on to St. Joseph's, met again by Jean and Mark, who were kind enough to loan Tim their car to make the last presentation at Bowdoin. Thanks to Keisha Payson for organizing the talk there. It was a bit of a whirlwind but well worth it as RR reached over a hundred students outside our "normal" sphere of influence. &

Gloria Powers, who attended one of the presentations, expresses the effect RR's presentation can have on audiences.

"I honestly can't stop thinking about your presentation. I feel as though the harsh reality of the world has finally been exposed, and I'm standing here, still in shock. I look around and all I see is waste, and am shameful of the contributions I have made in consumerism... So I ask myself, how am I going to make a difference? In the past few days I have been insanely conscious of everything I eat, recycle, waste and do not waste. The more people behind an action, the more power the action obtains... I totally support everything you are doing, and wish to contribute to the best of my ability."

Contact us at (718) 398-3760 to arrange a presentation for your school or community group.

Oxy Oil *continued from page 2*

in ending military intervention in Colombia and to pressure the administration to send humanitarian aid.

Colombia is now preparing itself for inclusion into the Free Trade Area of the Americas, an extension of NAFTA to the entire Western Hemisphere. This will allow multinational corporations easy access to the resources of Colombia and anyone in the way of this process is threatened with death. In months past, several indigenous leaders have been targeted by paramilitary groups. If the FTAA is implemented, the world will be seeing more indigenous massacres in Colombia as first peoples reside on the richest natural resource base. Currently President Pastrana is pushing to have the Colombian Constitution rewritten – which currently gives indigenous peoples autonomy over their land and their culture. This is a measure similar to Mexico revoking article 27 in 1993 to prepare for inclusion into the North American Free Trade Agreement – a step which led to the Zapatista uprising. &

NYC Transit Authority's Rainforest Wood Tied to Armed Conflict, Terrorism and Illegal Logging

Members of Rainforest Relief along with Times Up and other organizations demonstrated in late May in front of New York City Transit Authority's Brooklyn headquarters protesting the use of wood cut from west African rainforests. The wood, called ekki or azobe, is logged from Liberia or Cameroon and may be funding armed conflict or be illegally logged.



NYC's subway track ties still destroy rainforests.

Logging in Liberia supports the corrupt and dictatorial regime of Charles Taylor. According to a United Nations report, while the Liberian people go hungry, Taylor uses funds from the sale of diamonds and timber to buy weapons for armed conflicts in Sierra Leone and elsewhere. Taylor has decreed that all extractive contracts go through him personally and has done away with democracy. He is also known to have had dealings with the al Qaeda network.

"It's incredibly ironic that the Transit Authority is using funds from New York City taxpayers to support armed conflict and indirectly support the very people who are believed to have destroyed the World Trade Center," said Tim Keating, Rainforest Relief's Executive Director.

In Cameroon, 90% of logging is done illegally, according to estimates from the Cameroon government and NGOs. Logging in this region contributes to the eradication of species such as chimpanzees and to the displacement of indigenous peoples.

Holding a sign reading "NYCTA's Rainforest Wood Funds Terrorism", Tim Doody, Rainforest Relief campaigner, said, "Anyone buying wood needs to pay attention to the impacts of their purchases and stop sourcing from endangered forests or illegal sources."

The group is calling on NYC agencies to pledge to no longer use wood from endangered forests and instead use locally produced recycled plastic lumber which lasts longer than hardwoods, saves money, creates local jobs, doesn't need treatment with carcinogenic chemicals and diverts waste from landfills. Chicago Transit Authority has already purchased over 50,000 recycled plastic lumber track ties. &

News from the Northwest

Allison Pang, Campaign Coordinator, Northwest Chapter

Cost Plus Hears from Customers

Rainforest Relief jumped into action when we discovered that the Cost Plus World Market chain was selling lawn furniture made of nyatoh wood from highly endangered Indonesian rainforests. After complaints to the company fell on deaf ears, we drafted a postcard demanding that they immediately stop selling the nyatoh products and make a commitment to stop selling any other products containing woods from endangered rainforests. Days after receiving our customer-signed postcards the company sent out a letter in an attempt to placate environmentally responsible consumers, pointing to their policy to only buy wood from forests designated for commercial logging. This is an absurd and indefensible posture since commercial logging and associated roads are the leading cause of rainforest destruction and degradation in Indonesia and many other areas. We will continue to fight until rainforest wood is no longer sold at Cost Plus.

What You Can Do: Please contact Cost Plus and request that they cease sales of wood from illegal sources (particularly nyatoh), phase out woods from endangered forests and phase in woods certified under Forest Stewardship Council guidelines.

Mr. Murray Dashe, CEO • Cost Plus World Market
200 4th Street • Oakland, CA 94607
Phone: 510.893.7300 • Fax: 510.893.6418

McCormick & Schmick's Now On the Right Track

McCormick & Schmick's Restaurants is a national chain based in Portland. The company has been on our radar screen for their use of rainforest wood building materials, in particular their mahogany interiors (the amount of mahogany used in the chain's Harborside Restaurant is one of the largest we've ever seen in Portland). After unreturned phone calls and an ignored letter we started mailing the protest postcards that we'd been collecting. Just a few days later, we were surprised to hear from CEO Saed Mohseni. The CEO said he was not aware his company was using woods from rainforests, and it looks like the company will work with us to develop an environmentally responsible wood use policy. &

What You Can Do: Contact McCormick & Schmick's Restaurants and thank them for their interest in working with Rainforest Relief to develop a policy to avoid using woods from endangered forests.

Mr. Saed Mohseni, CEO • McCormick & Schmick's Restaurants
720 SW Washington St. • Portland, OR 97205 • ph: 503.226.3440