

5 Marble Hill Rd
Great Meadows
NJ 07838

April 6, 2009
To the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention

Dear Sir or Madam,

We are writing to the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention to discuss our plans for the preservation of the paramo. The paramo, as you may know, is a wetland area in the Andes of Ecuador, that we believe is very important in the preservation of water in Ecuador. We believe that it should be included in the Ramsar Convention, so that it can be protected. Allow us to explain.

The paramo absorbs water that comes into it, sucks it down, and lets it out much more slowly than a normal piece of land would. This sponge-like effect stops flooding in the wet season, when a lot of rain comes down very quickly, by soaking it up. This water would otherwise flood straight down the mountain and wash away homes, crops and topsoil. It also acts as a big sponge, filtering out pollution and purifying the water that it lets out.

Because the water doesn't flood down the mountain all at once, but trickles out slowly, it doesn't destroy the topsoil, but instead keeps a steady flow of water well into the dry season, which will help crops grow. Because 2/3 of all soil erosion on earth is caused by water, this will have a significant impact on farming in the area.

When the dry season rolls around each year, it can cause serious droughts. But if the paramo stays intact, it can slowly release water that will trickle down the mountain and nourish the farmer's crops, without washing the topsoil away. And therefore the crops grow up to feed the people and the animals.

Unfortunately for the paramo, people have not always been kind to it. They have turned the soil and burned the vegetation normally on the paramo in order to farm there, which takes out the roots which are holding the topsoil in place. They are also keeping cattle and sheep on the paramo, which pull up the plants and tear up the topsoil with their hooves.

However, there are things we can do about it! We can keep alpacas on the paramo, which don't hurt the soil as they are light and have padded hooves. The wool from these alpacas can be sold at the market to make money for the community. We can also leave it alone and let it do what it is meant to do.

We hope you will consider adding the paramo to the list of protected wetlands. We thank you for your consideration.

Yours Faithfully,

Jack Wooldridge
Lynn Vonder Haar