*Press release*

Montpellier, 3rd August 2015

International Congress on Conservation Biology European Congress on Conservation Biology

**Call for Roadless Areas**

**Conservation scientists urge for immediate protection of roadless areas throughout the world, at the International Congress for Conservation Biology, Montpelier, France. Keeping these areas free of roads is vital for biodiversity and ecosystem services under threat of climate change.**

More than 65 million km of roads criss-cross the planet, and the number of roads are predicted to increase in coming decades. This is especially true in developing countries. Roads have many negative effects both on the environment and local societies. Most of them are irreversible. One of the main impacts of roads is that they are followed by more roads, contribute to land use changes like logging, fires or hunting, and promote urban and agriculture developments. Roads have particularly strong impacts when expanding into natural and intact areas, still undisturbed by human activities.

On the other side of the coin, roadless areas are refuges for native animals, they block the spread of diseases and produce clean air and water for humans. These roadless areas are also more resistant to catastrophes like fire. They help animals to move without being killed while crossing the road and keep natural areas connected. These areas are also important for stabilizing the weather and moderate extreme events like droughts or storms.

In spite of the benefits they provide to people, roadless areas are under risk, because of growing pressure to access markets and natural resources. The International and European Congress for Conservation Biology opened Monday with a symposium on the conservation of roadless areas. At the congress, scientists urged for identifying areas that remain road-free, and to protect them with legislation and accurate road planning.

More than 2000 conservation professionals discuss this topic and other important issues during this week at the International and European Congress for Conservation Biology in Montpellier.

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