

Leadership in Action - Green Sanctuaries

AUTHOR: JOSHUA TICKNER-BELLAU
SUPERVISOR: CHRISTOPHE GERSCHEL (FOUNDER OF GREEN SANCTUARIES)

Foundation Background

Green Sanctuaries is a French conservation initiative working to protect key forests before it is too late. Founded in 2022 as a fonds de dotation (philanthropic foundation) and complemented by an association established in 2025, Green Sanctuaries combines immediate action on forest protection with long-term transformation through education, scientific research, and alliance with Indigenous peoples.

Green Sanctuaries' work rests on five key pillars:

- **Forest Securitization** - Direct acquisition, protection, and management of threatened forest areas (foundation-led)
- **Public Awareness** - Education and engagement to connect people with forests and their value (association-led)
- **Scientific Research** - Support for biodiversity monitoring, ecological documentation, and knowledge generation (association-led)
- **Indigenous Accompaniment** - Active partnership with Indigenous communities as forest guardians and knowledge holders (association-led)
- **Sustainable Solutions** - Development and promotion of alternatives that build territory resilience to climate change (association-led)

Judicial Observatory

My main goal while working for Green Sanctuaries under my LIA was to help them to expand and continue with their work of creating a judicial observatory of the relevant environmental laws within the countries that they worked.

Why is this tool necessary?

Organizations working at community level often lack access to clear legal frameworks for forest protection, networks of trusted advisors. Delays in accessing this information slow conservation strategy development and increase vulnerability to exploitation. This resource can thus be shared with both local leaders and organisations to effectively aid with conservation efforts (thus fulfilling Laidlaw's criteria of work undertaken during LIA to produce outreach and educational output).

Legal Infrastructure as a foundation for conservation

Green Sanctuaries believe that effective forest conservation requires three elements working together:

- **Legal clarity** - organizations need access to current, comprehensible information on what conservation mechanisms exist, how they work, and what specialists can help implement them
- **Community agency** - Indigenous peoples and local communities must have recognized rights to their lands and meaningful participation in conservation decisions
- **Institutional resilience** - conservation structures (foundations, concessions, cooperatives, reserves) must be designed for long-term survival and benefit-sharing



Community Agency



Institutional Resilience



Legal Clarity

Before starting my work within this project, I spoke on the phone with several worldwide key contributors, who explained the procedure and structure of this database per country alongside the resources I would laterly use.

For each country, I was tasked with writing up:

- **Fiche de présentation (per law):** Clear summary of the law, adoption context, key provisions, and coverage of primary forests
- **Specialist directory:** Leading environmental lawyers, NGO networks, and Indigenous organizations working in forest law
- **Rights of nature mapping:** Which countries recognize nature as a legal subject, and what litigation precedents exist
- **Case studies:** Applications of the law.

Acknowledgements: This project was made possible by the Laidlaw Scholarship Program, and would not have been possible without the support of the Trinity College Dublin Employability Team. A further acknowledgement should go towards Christophe Gerschel, for inviting me into the foundation in Paris for the period of 6 weeks.



Secondary Work

I also took part in helping with daily processes and other tasks as necessary. This included:

1. Researching and latterly writing up a document when the foundation was inquired into by a Spanish organisation attempting to similarly create a fonds de dotation and asking for advice on how this could be carried out by similar processes in Spain.
2. Reading over files concerning Green Sanctuary's attempt to obtain a conservation concession within Rio Abiseo, then researching into the Peruvian legal background provided by a local lawyer, alongside contacting Paul Rosolie of Junglekeepers to ask for further advice on this matter. I then wrote up a report and presented to GS. It is worth stressing that this task functioned as a **test of the peruvian judicial observatory documents I had drafted**.
3. Researching into and contacting specialists regarding the conservation and ability to learn the Napo Runa language, which belonged to one of the Ecuadorian community's that Green Sanctuaries was attempting to work with, in line with their values of **providing sustainable conservation in conjunction with local communities**. The founder searched for accessible resources/specialists to learn this language.

Sustainable Development Goals attended to by this project



Development of 3Cs

Capacities:

- **People** - I was communicating across the organization alongside collaborating with GS' external advisors and experts, often switching into French for these conversations. **[Communication, Global Citizenship, Collaborative Mindset]**
- **Process** - **prioritisation and time management** was critical in order to get to grips with a substantive piece of work and be able to provide reasonable input and produce useful work for GS. **Research and analysis** was necessary given as I read large amounts of legal material, analysed precedents through case law, mapped specialist networks.

Changemaker Values:

- **Ambitious / brave** - working across multiple languages (French, Spanish and English), working on legal documents which regularly would not be in my remit - I do not study law!
- **Determined / Fast** - intaking information quickly and processing in order to understand the task at hand and help to continue producing these documents within the 6 week timeframe.

Character

- **Purpose** - The project aligned with distinctive goals of forest conservation set out by the charity and gave me a very distinct purpose, working towards viable change.

Resources utilised for Judicial Observatory Work

- TimberLex (FAO): <https://www.fao.org/faolex/timberlex/> — Country-specific forest legislation, policies, and international commitments on forest management and trade
- FAOLEX Database: <https://www.fao.org/faolex/> — Comprehensive collection of national environmental legislation
- CBD Country Profiles: <https://www.cbd.int/> — Biodiversity Convention information by country
- Global Forest Watch (GFW): <https://www.globalforestwatch.org/> — Real-time deforestation monitoring, forest coverage maps, and protected area status
- GeoBosques (MINAM/SERFOR): <https://geobosques.minam.gob.pe/> — National forest surveillance system (Peru-specific)
- Earth Law Center: <https://www.earthlawcenter.org/> — Legal case studies on rights of nature, particularly Maraón River case (Peru, 2024)
- International Rivers: <https://www.internationalrivers.org/> — River rights litigation and precedent documentation
- Eco Jurisprudence Monitor: <https://ecojurisprudence.org/> — Database of environmental law cases and legal precedents
- SPDA (Sociedad Peruana de Derecho Ambiental): <https://spda.org.pe/> — Leading environmental law organization
- DAR (Derecho, Ambiente y Recursos Naturales): <https://dar.org.pe/> — Forest governance and indigenous rights expertise
- AIDSEP (Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana): <https://www.aidsep.org.pe/> — Indigenous federation representing Amazonian peoples
- Rainforest Foundation US: <https://rainforestfoundation.org/our-work/where-we-work/peru/>
- Governmental Agencies - MINAM, SERFOR, SERNANP, SPDA, DAR, AIDSEP