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PRESS RELEASE

Iwokrama Forest achieves first ever claim for verified ecosystem services and retains coveted Forest Stewardship Council™ (FSC™) Certification for Forest Management.

Georgetown, Guyana. The Iwokrama International Centre for Rain Forest Conservation and Development (*Iwokrama*) has received confirmation that the Iwokrama Forest has retained its Forest Stewardship Council™ (FSC™) Certification for Forest Management following an annual surveillance audit in November 2024.

During the recent audit, the Iwokrama International Centre was also audited for two Ecosystem Services (ES) - Biodiversity Conservation and Recreational (tourism) Services. The Iwokrama Forest scored another first again as the only area in Guyana and the Caribbean to achieve this accolade. This verification of Ecosystem Services provides an additional opportunity to demonstrate positive outcomes and provides further third-party verification of Sustainable Forest Management best practices at the Centre. Verification of the ES means that there are no major corrective actions against any requirements of the FSC™ Ecosystem Services procedure.

Iwokrama's CEO, Dane Gobin, noted that "the Centre is proud to have scored another first for Guyana with regard to sustainable forest management practices" He continued that "in 2008 the Centre was the first to achieve and maintain FSC™ certification in Guyana. I hope that other forest management operators will follow in our footsteps".

Anne-Marie Ford, Head of the Certification team stated, "this achievement fortifies Iwokrama's high value and long established relationship of forest management with ecotourism and research."

Iwokrama's Certificate for Forest Management was renewed in January 2025, confirming that the Iwokrama Forest has maintained its certification uninterrupted since October 2016 (Iwokrama received initial certification in 2008). The Iwokrama Forest was the first forest to have maintained this certification in Guyana and has raised the bar for forest management in Guyana.





FSC™ certification is the highest international accolade that Forest Managers can receive, and it is testament to the Centre’s application of international social, ecological and environmental best practices in its management of the Iwokrama Forest. Iwokrama’s forest management procedures and policies were rigorously measured against the Interim National Standard for Guyana (FSC-STD-GUY-01-2020) which includes 10 principles, 70 criteria and 213 indicators. Key to the adherence to FSC™ guidelines is that forest managers must follow all national rules, laws and guidelines including the GFC’s comprehensive Codes of Practice. The assessment team evaluated all elements of Iwokrama's operations applicable to the standard to determine compliance against national and international benchmarks.

During the recent surveillance audit, Iwokrama received only 2 observations. Non-compliances are categorized as “observations”, “minor corrective actions” or “major corrective actions” and are a normal part of any assessment / audit process. The number and the severity of the non-compliances with the standard, could prevent the applicant from being maintaining the certificate.

In recent years, many international buyers and consumers have increased demands for proof of forest products being sourced from well-managed forests. Currently, many of the major global markets require some sort of certification for wood imports, to provide assurance to buyers that wood comes from forests managed according to strict social, economic, and environmental standards.

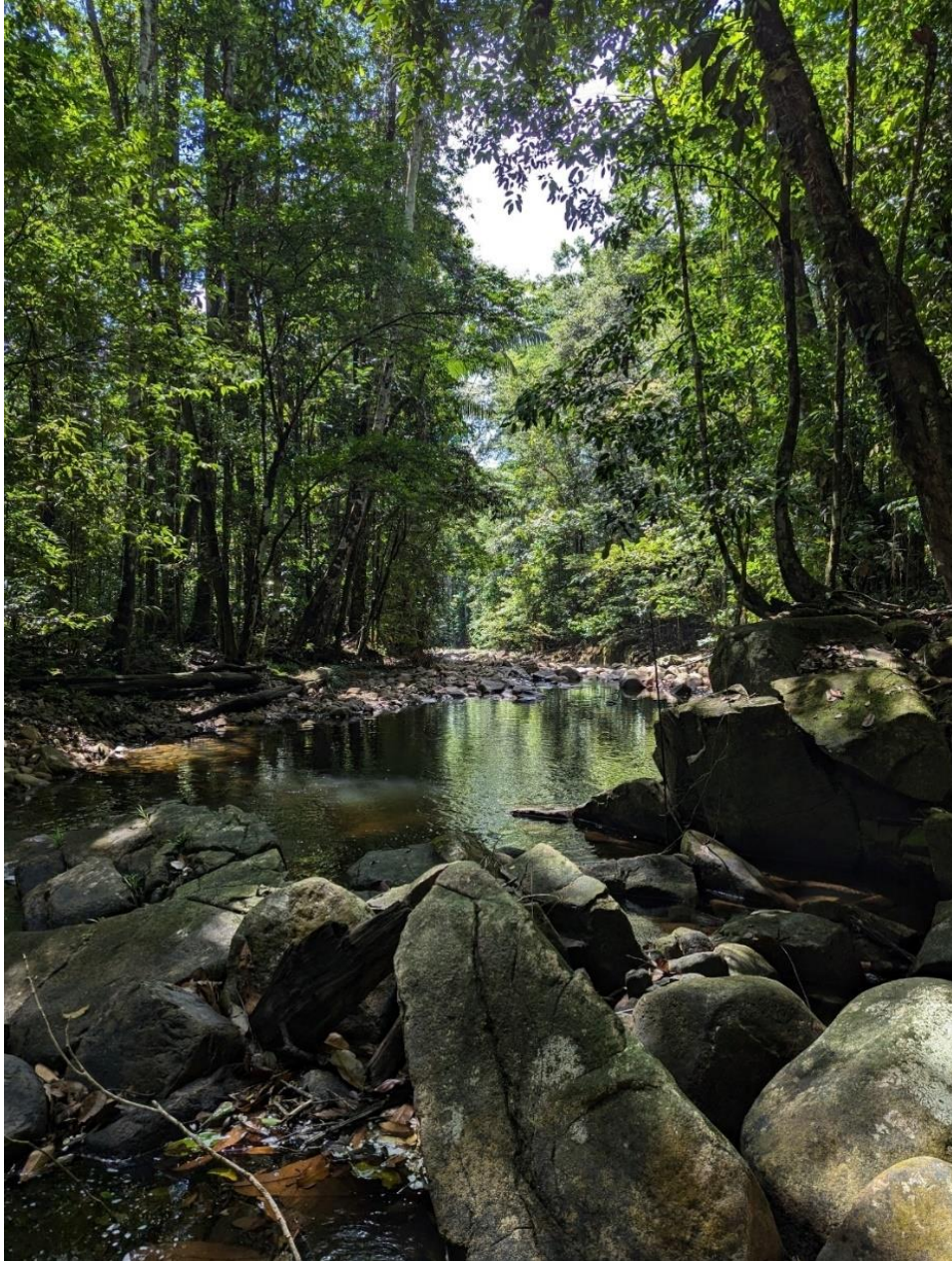
The Centre is grateful to the Government of Guyana for their valuable ongoing support to the Centre. Special thanks are extended to the certification team of the Centre and our local community partners, the North Rupununi District Development Board (NRDDB), for their unwavering support.

Photos below (2 included)

Photo 1- Field Audit 2024- Staff with International Auditors



Photo 2 – Forest on route to Turu Falls- a new tourism hiking highlight for Iwokrama



Notes to the Editors:

1. About Iwokrama

The Iwokrama International Centre (IIC) was established in 1996 under a joint mandate from the Government of Guyana and the Commonwealth Secretariat to manage the Iwokrama forest, a unique reserve of 371,000 hectares of rainforest “in a manner that will lead to lasting ecological, economic and social benefits to the people of Guyana and to the world in general”.

The Centre, guided by an international Board of Trustees, is unique providing a dedicated well managed and researched forest environment. The forest is zoned into a Sustainable Utilisation Area (SUA) and a Wilderness Preserve (WP) in which to test the concept of a truly sustainable forest where

conservation, environmental balance and economic use can be mutually reinforcing. The IIC collaborates with the Government of Guyana, the Commonwealth and other international partners and donors to develop new approaches and forest management models to enable countries with rainforests to market their ecosystem services whilst carefully managing their resources through innovative and creative conservation practices. In more recent years, the Centre has received support from corporate partners such as Exxon Mobil (Guyana) Limited who has funded the development of its Science Programme and continues to provide an annual contribution to the implementation of this Programme.

Iwokrama brings together:

- 20 local communities (approximately 7,000 people) who are shareholders and participants in the IIC's sustainable timber, tourism, research operations and forest management activities through complex co-management and benefit sharing arrangements;
- Scientists and researchers engaged in groundbreaking research into the impacts of climate change on the forest and measuring the scope and value of its ecosystem services; and
- A portfolio of sustainably managed and certified business models using innovative governance systems which include participation of the private and public sectors and the local communities, earning income from the forest and its natural assets whilst employing international social, environmental and economic best practice, whilst still keeping abreast of the ever changing thinking on funding for environmental projects in the face of climate change and the perennial scarcity of international finance.

This alliance and the Centre's work programmes are committed to showing how a rain forest can be used for real sustainability, real climate change protection and real community benefit.

For further details about the Iwokrama International Centre please visit www.iwokrama.org , www.iwokramariverlodge.com or contact Dane Gobin, Chief Executive Officer on dgobin@iwokrama.org.