



## MEDIA ADVISORY

### The Mountain Institute (TMI) wins “Water Impact” Award in Solution Search “Farming for Biodiversity” Contest

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WASHINGTON, D.C.: During the United Nations Climate Change Conference this week, the global Solution Search contest named The Mountain Institute’s *Ancestral Technologies and Climate Change* initiative as the winner in the “Water Impact” category. Florencia Zapata, Deputy Director for Institutional Development, TMI Andes Program gratefully accepted this award from the president of Palau during an awards program on November 14, 2017 in Bonn, Germany. In accepting the award, Zapata thanked the Institute’s staff, key partners and funders including the Nor Yauyos Cochas Landscape Reserve, the Peruvian Ministry of Environment, the National Service of Natural Protected Areas of Peru (SERNANP), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Environment Programme (UNEP.)

Solution Search is a global contest designed to identify, reward and spotlight innovative approaches to conservation. This year’s contest focused on finding the most innovative solutions that make farming more sustainable and promote behaviors that increase biodiversity across the agricultural sector.

The Mountain Institute’s Executive Director, Dr. Andrew Taber, describes the *Ancestral Technologies* initiative as: “A partnership with communities in highland Peru, supported by the latest science, that has led to restoring water management systems that have been neglected for centuries. The mountain people we work with have repaired and refurbished key elements of their ancestors’ irrigation infrastructures to revive mountain grasslands and wetlands. In areas hard hit by climate change, locals are seeing improved livestock, better water availability and biodiversity conservation. Winning the Solution Search Prize increases our ability to scale up our innovative approach to benefit communities throughout the Andes and across the mountain world.”

Dr. Jorge Recharte, Director of TMI’s Andes Program added, “We feel immensely honored to receive this prize. The solution developed in our *Ancestral Technologies and Climate Change* initiative was identified and implemented successfully because we listened carefully to mountain people during every step. This prize affirms our conviction that the correct role is to be mediators, facilitating a process that brings forth the immense knowledge and care that mountain people have for their land. We especially thank the staff of the Nor Yauyos Cochas Landscape Reserve for trusting The Mountain Institute as a partner. And our heartfelt thanks go to the communities of Canchayllo and Miraflores for giving us the opportunity to re-discover with them the ancient, water management systems built by their ancestors. Peruvian mountain communities have shown us that there are ways to lessen climate change’s impact. Their revitalized, ancestral technologies are now an effective response to the formidable challenges from climate change. We hope our Institute’s “listen first” approach will continue expanding and improving our work with high-mountain communities in Peru and beyond.”

**About the Winning Initiative:** Selected from an unprecedented 338 entries, *Ancestral Technologies and Climate Change* combines local, traditional knowledge with modern science to help restore pre-Incan water management systems in the grassland-wetland ecosystems of the central Andes, known as the *puna*. High mountain communities, farmers, herders and native wildlife all rely on this fragile ecosystem—as do millions of people

downstream. In the communities of Miraflores and Canchayllo, puna landscapes have been drying out and shrinking due to overgrazing by livestock and accelerating climate change. Our project helped locals repair and restore existing reservoirs, irrigation canals and other water regulating systems originally built by their ancestors, possibly as far back as 1,000 AD in the Nor Yauyos Cochas Reserve. By restoring ancestral technologies we have helped to revive the puna ecosystem, benefiting humans and wildlife alike. Availability of local water has increased, especially in the dry season, leading to a boost in livestock productivity. This, in turn, has brought greater food security and economic benefits to these mountain communities. The richness and abundance of native plants and wildlife have also improved in the surrounding ecosystem, making the *puna*, and all who rely on it, more resilient to climate change. More about the project here: <http://mountain.org/ancestral-technologies-climate-change/> .

**About the Solution Search Contest:** The Solution Search contest is part of a larger initiative funded by the International Climate Initiative (IKI), a German initiative supported by The Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB). Over three years, Rare, IFOAM - Organics International, and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Secretariat has been working together to identify these promising approaches. Winners will host capacity-building workshops across the globe to spread their effective solutions. This workshop series, known as *Campaigning for Conservation*, will further empower local practitioners to raise awareness of the value of biodiversity and to conduct social marketing campaigns promoting behavior change in support of the identified solutions. All entries to this contest will become part of a larger network of stakeholders engaged in supporting biodiversity-friendly agriculture.

Partners and judges represent organizations including: Rare, the Global Environment Facility, Convention on Biological Diversity Secretariat, Patagonia, Save the Children, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition, IFOAM - Organics International, Deutsche Welle, Inter-American Development Bank, Stockholm Resilience Center, EcoAgriculture Partners, The International Indigenous Peoples' Forum on Climate Change and the United Nations Indigenous Peoples Rapporteur, CONABIO (Mexico), Panorama, World Wildlife Fund, Blue Solutions, Global Island Partnership, Food Tank, and Young Professionals for Agricultural Development. Click here to learn about all the 2017 Solution Search winners: <http://bit.ly/2iZWNAd>

### **About The Mountain Institute**

Since 1972, The Mountain Institute has partnered with mountain people to transform their livelihoods, protect their cultures and thus conserve vital natural resources for the planet. TMI is the only organization focused solely on mountains worldwide and actively dedicated to mountain communities and their unique environments. Our headquarters office is in Washington D.C. and we have locally-staffed offices in Nepal and Peru. Learn more at [www.mountain.org](http://www.mountain.org)

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**Photos & Captions:**



H.E. Tommy Remengesau, Jr., President of the Republic of Palau presents the Solution Search “Water Impact” Prize to Florencia Zapata of TMI’s Andes Program. Photo by Rare.



Florencia Zapata holds the “Water Impact” prize at The Mountain Institute’s project display. Photo by Rare.



Group photo of all Solution Search prize winners with Rare President and CEO Brett Jenks. Photo by Rare.