



**For Immediate Release**  
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## **Panthera, Colombian Leaders Sign Agreement to Protect the Future of the Jaguar**

### *Central American corridor seen as integral to the cat's survival in the wild*

**Bogotá** – Colombian government officials, in partnership with Panthera, the U.S.-based big cat conservation group, took a major step toward ensuring the survival of jaguars throughout South America yesterday.

Colombia Vice President Francisco Santos, Minister of Environment Carlos Costa, Director General of National Parks, Julia Miranda, Alan Rabinowitz, Panthera President and other representatives of Panthera signed a memorandum of understanding yesterday, initiating a historic agreement supporting activities that will ensure the conservation of the jaguar and its habitat. Panthera, one of the world's premier science-based conservation organizations, is currently identifying key populations of jaguars in Colombia, and connectivity among these jaguar groups, in order to ensure survival of the cats.

“This agreement will enable the preservation of the jaguar - a cultural icon and a natural heritage of Colombia,” explained Santos.

The agreement promotes connectivity between parks in order to benefit the jaguar, sustaining biodiversity and improving landscape resiliency in the face of climate change.

“We are extremely excited about this agreement, because the most important link in ensuring connectivity of jaguars all the way from northern Mexico to Argentina is in Colombia, the corridor in which Central American and South American jaguar populations meet” said Rabinowitz.

Although the exact number of jaguars in Colombia is unknown, the country – due to its location at the northern boundary of South America – contains significantly important populations. Having received ministerial level support for the corridor in every Central American country, Panthera turned its attention to Colombia.

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“The location of Colombia makes it the heart of the jaguar corridor and critical for our work” emphasized Rabinowitz.

Panthera Colombia is part of Panthera, a New York-based organization dedicated to saving the world’s 36 species of wild cats. It gathers the best minds in wild cat science, and the most recognized wild cat conservationists in the world.

The jaguar is the largest cat in the western hemisphere and their conservation leads to protecting large portions of biodiversity. As large predators, jaguars control prey demographics, which can also influence the consumption of plants, seeds and fruits, and eventually change the structure and regeneration of forests. Thus, the extinction of the jaguar can fundamentally alter a functional ecosystem in addition to being a considerable loss to humanity.

Panthera will work hand in hand with the different development practices to find ways for jaguars and humans to coexist. Jaguars are currently threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation, and by retaliatory hunting from cattle ranchers whose cattle are killed by jaguars. Panthera is working to mitigate rancher-jaguar conflict across their range.

“We have received a great response from ranchers and rural populations and we expect to extend this program to the north and east of Colombia” explained Esteban Payan, Panthera’s coordinator of the Northern South America Jaguar Corridor.

The jaguar is a significant cultural symbol throughout South America. All indigenous South American cultures have included the jaguar in their myths of creation and their ancient art. Examples in Colombia include the Chiribiquete petroglyphs and the huge monoliths of San Agustín. Jaguars have always been considered gods, dieties of creation, or managers of extreme natural forces.

For more information, please visit [www.panthera.org](http://www.panthera.org).

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