Production Forest Inventories in the Amazon
Managing the Forest for Economic Growth and Conservation

The forest is one of the most important sources of income for people in the Ucayali region. In 2010 alone, Ucayali exported US$52 million in forest products. Sustainable timber production also serves an important conservation purpose in Ucayali. Forested areas without assigned rights or zoning have the highest rate of deforestation in the Amazon region. However, lack of reliable forest inventory data led to many problems for legal forest concessions in the region and opened the door to fraud in concession management plans, leading to a halt on all new concessions and paralysis in the forest sector in 2006.

This is the crisis that Miguel Cambero faced when he started as the Forest Inventory Coordinator for the Regional Government of Ucayali. He did not have enough information about forest resources to know the state of existing concessions, where to lease new concessions or which profitable timber species were in production forest areas. Since 2011, USAID’s Peru Forest Sector Initiative (PFSI) has been working with national and regional forest authorities in Peru to solve this problem, among many other challenges in the forest sector.

“U.S. Forest Service experts working with PFSI helped Ucayali to design a robust inventory process that built the capacity of not only the regional government, but a variety of stakeholders, including businesses, native communities, and academia to plan and execute an accurate forest inventory, using state of the art field instruments and softwares that ensure data quality and control. Including local universities in the inventory process in Ucayali resulted in a revision of university curriculum on forest inventory, ensuring a future generation of foresters trained in sound inventory methodology and a more responsibly managed and profitable forest sector in the future. Likewise, the regional government now has processes to inform native and rural communities about inventories, what they can expect, and how they can engage.

Cambero reflects, “We received a tremendous amount of support in the processes that we developed. We now have reliable information on the timber sector, and we can make decisions based on that information. We have stopped crawling; now we are walking”. As a result of this process, Ucayali has now up-to-date information on over 800,000 hectares of forest, fully completing Phase I of their inventory, allowing them to begin to award new forest concessions for the first time in 10 years. They plan to complete Phase II in 2017. These achievements, made possible through the support of USAID, will help Ucayali to promote legal, sustainable harvest of timber and ensure a thriving and environmentally sustainable forest economy for the benefit of generations to come.