

2019 Annual Report



International Society of Tropical Foresters

2019 Annual Report

Cover photo by Maria Paula Sarigumba



Letter from the President

Dear ISTF Members,

We value your participation in the International Society of Tropical Foresters. Here we give you a bit of background on the organization, the accomplishments for 2019, and the aspirations for 2020. Please work with us to strengthen ISTF, for the achievement of conservation and sustainable use of our tropical forest resources.

ISTF History and Current Challenges

The International Society of Tropical Foresters was founded in 1950 by Tom Gill, who was joined by foresters throughout the world “to facilitate the transfer of information on the management, protection, and wise use of tropical forests”. The outsized personalities who supported this effort, including Warren Doolittle and Frank H. Wadsworth, instilled in ISTF a passion for tropical forests and a determination to protect and enhance the resource.

Like all volunteer-driven entities, however, people moved on and the ISTF suffered a decline in governmental and grant funding, even as tropical forest resources were being more closely identified with global environmental health and biodiversity, and society was recognizing the diminishing quality of life that all living things were suffering due to degradation of the resource. In spite of valiant efforts to restore funding, ISTF went into hiatus in 2012, as happened before in the 1970s.

But the dream did not go away and the need to better understand tropical forest ecosystems and transfer the voluminous knowledge on tropical ecology and management to conserve what is left still remained. Recognizing this need, ISTF is reinitiating and is ready to capitalize on the connectivity of the internet age to build a true global community.

In the current global environment, the threats to tropical forests and their inhabitants are accelerating. Dramatic swings in short- and longer-term climatic conditions, competition for natural resources and food, and economic pressures that reward conversion of tropical forests to other uses are increasing at an alarming rate. We could do a far better job managing and maintaining tropical forests if knowledge and experiences were shared more widely and effectively.

This is where the revitalized International Society of Tropical Foresters can step in. There are many advocacy organizations in the world conservation space, with different objectives. There are many different sources of knowledge generation in NGOs, universities, government agencies, and even global organizations. ISTF's goal is to enhance tropical forest conservation, sustainable forest management and restoration by connecting these knowledge "jackpots" with the end-users who need this knowledge to manage their local ecosystems. By facilitating communication not just between knowledge generators and knowledge users (who can themselves be knowledge generators), but also among practitioners themselves, ISTF intends to create a global community committed to getting science off the shelf and onto the land. In doing so, ISTF will not reinforce existing knowledge deserts – regions and peoples hamstrung by limited access to technology and education – but rather consolidate a community of practice, to ensure that appropriate knowledge is disseminated to where it is needed. The communication loop will be completed by fostering feedback from the practitioner to inform science and policy.

Actions

With the election of officers to the Central ISTF representing both regional and functional emphases, in 2019 ISTF solicited its members to form (and reform) local chapters emphasizing their particular on-the-ground conditions while still informing and being informed by their fellow ISTF members throughout the world. The reduction in the hierarchy of the ISTF leadership team was deliberate, because the true impact of ISTF will be by members informing and being informed by their fellow ISTF members throughout the world. Imagine a community of practice, an educational model that has thousands of sources of knowledge and thousands of users of knowledge with many individuals and organizations being both source and user. This would be a truly sustainable model.

The **Finance Committee** organized around a shared vision and scope, and developed a spreadsheet to map funding opportunities to promote knowledge transfer. Using membership surveys, the **Mission Committee** further refined our understanding of ISTF-Global's niche and where we can serve tropical conservation and our local membership needs. Along those lines, the Committee organized ISTF-sponsored events at the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) World Congress 2019 in Curitiba, Brazil, the Society of American Foresters' (SAF) Annual Convention in Louisville, USA, Asia-Pacific Forestry Week 2019, and at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 25) in Madrid. The **Governance Committee** led on the critical task of developing chapter formation guidelines and model chapter bylaws. The committee provided initial guidance for chapter formation in various countries. ISTF is off to a good start with the initiation of the Rwanda chapter in September 2019 and additional prospective chapters are at various stages of formation. As groups coalesce, not only are efforts for the sustainable use and conservation of tropical forest resources enhanced, but the rest of ISTF is strengthened, too.

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Going forward

The year 2020 presents new challenges for ISTF but the Society has built the foundation to meet these challenges head on. All three committees will finish their internal organization and hand over leadership to volunteer members, rather than the ISTF-Global officers who run them now. Once ISTF is incorporated, the **Finance Committee** will identify and seek out funding opportunities that will enable ISTF-Global to achieve its goals. Enhancing communication and knowledge transfer about tropical forest conservation issues is the *raison d'être* of ISTF-Global. The **Mission Committee** intends to develop our communication strategy and organize events like a roving annual meeting conducted sequentially in 2-3 time zone blocks for members in different regions. In 2019 ISTF had members in 102 countries! The **Governance Committee** will complete incorporation of the Society in Puerto Rico and cement ISTF's status as a tax-exempt organization under the laws of the United States' Internal Revenue Service and the equivalent agency at the Puerto Rico level, el Departamento de Hacienda.

In conclusion

Tropical forest ecosystems worldwide are under threat, assaulted from many directions: biophysical, economic, demographic. This situation is affecting local communities and has implications at the global scale due to the increasing emissions caused by tropical forest degradation. ISTF's goal is to enhance and share knowledge about conservation and sustainable management of tropical forests in order to maintain these valuable resources for future generations. ISTF's key role is connecting people and restoring human connections to promote sustainability. ISTF is here to identify and transfer vital knowledge via a reinvigorated network, in order to safeguard, maintain, and restore tropical forests.

We look forward to working with you, the ISTF members, in 2020 and in the coming years, to improve the outlook for tropical forests, their resources, and, indeed, for our planet.

Sincerely,

W. Keith Moser
ISTF President (2019-2022)

ISTF was founded in the 1950s, and “in response to a worldwide concern for the fate of tropical and subtropical forests, ISTF is committed to the protection, wise management and rational use of the world’s tropical forests.”

ISTF Mission

To facilitate and promote sharing of best practices for the effective management, protection, and equitable and ecologically sustainable use of tropical forests and natural resources in the tropical and subtropical regions across the globe.

ISTF Objectives

1. Act as a center to communicate information about professional activities and tropical forest-related issues, in order to promote understanding of tropical forestry and sustainable land-use practices.
2. Recruit members from throughout the world, especially from tropical countries, and create a global online community of people interested in tropical forest science, protection, conservation, management, and policy.
3. Promote research and dissemination of scientific knowledge among tropical foresters, researchers, policy- and decision-makers, and community members.
4. Inform and advocate for international and local public policies and best practices that affect tropical forest science, conservation, and management.
5. Cooperate and collaborate with government, non-government, academic, and private sector organizations, agencies, and research centers, in order to promote the development and implementation of equitable and ecologically sustainable land use practices that value and conserve tropical forests.
6. In every aspect of its mission, vision, and activities, respect diversity in all its cultural, religious, economic, personal, and other manifestations.

Inaugural ISTF Board



Warren “Keith” Moser
President

Keith is a research forester with the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station in Flagstaff, Arizona. He is the scientist-in-charge of the Fort Valley Experimental Forest, the oldest forest experiment station in the Forest Service. His interests center around silviculture and ecophysiology, invasive species, and agroforestry. Moser was the recipient of a Fulbright specialist grant in 2017 that supported an exchange program near Shillong, Meghalaya, India, where he focused on education and research in agroforestry and management of second-growth *Pinus kesiya* forests. Moser has a B.A. in business management from North Carolina State University, an M.B.A. and a Master of Forestry from Duke University, and a Doctor of Forestry from Yale University. A 1994 winner of the Thurn und Taxis Förderpreis für die Forstwissenschaft that funded a postdoctoral appointment at Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich, Germany, Dr. Moser has worked for two Fortune 100 corporations, a 501c3 NGO specializing in ecological forestry, a state natural resource agency, and the US Forest Service.

The President acts as Chair of the Central Board of Director, supervises the operations of the organization, and performs the other usual duties of the office. As Chair of the Board he/she presides at meetings; with advice from the Board appoints members of standing committees and to other committees authorized by the Board; and performs all other duties incident to the Chair of the Board.



Ruth Metzel
Vice-President

Ruth has a Master of Forestry and MBA from Yale University, and a degree in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from Princeton University. In addition to working with the Azuero Eco Foundation, she has been a part of The Forests Dialogue, the International Society of Tropical Foresters, and the Governance, Environment and Markets Initiative at Yale. Ruth has written about Azuero in publications such as “Manejo de Nutrientes y Seguridad Alimentaria en Huertos Caseros Mesoamericanos” (2015) and “Farm to Forest: Factors Associated with Protecting and Planting Trees in a Panamanian Agricultural Landscape” (2015). Her field experience includes research projects with the Smithsonian in Panama, along with work in Costa Rica, Cuba, Honduras, Ghana, Guatemala, Kenya, Peru, Venezuela, and the United States. If she is not in the office, you can find her dancing típico, kayaking, hiking, or in a “*junta de embarre*.”

The Vice-President assists the President as needed and performs other customary duties of the office.



© Maria Paula Sarigumba



Maria Paula Sarigumba
Secretary

Maria Paula is a Filipino forester who is passionate about youth and gender themes in natural resources management. She has worked for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO). Prior to these engagements, she spent time doing field research and engaging with multiple stakeholders for watershed management projects in the Philippines. She currently works as a science writer and editor for the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR). She holds a degree in forestry from the University of the Philippines Los Banos and, at present, working towards her master's degree in environment and sustainability at the University of Saskatchewan in Canada.

The Secretary keeps the minutes of the ISTF Central Board, conducts its correspondence, is custodian of its records, and performs other customary duties of the office.



Michael Sterner
Treasurer

Michael holds a Master of Forestry degree from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies and a law degree from the University of Washington. He is an attorney in Oregon, USA. He currently works as director of the El Programa Hispano Tax Clinic. Since 2001, Mr. Sterner has consulted in the US, Canada, Mexico, and Papua New Guinea on natural resources policy, taxation of natural resources, human rights & the environment, forestland investment, growth and yield modelling, assessment of tribal/indigenous forestry programs, and FSC certification auditing. He served as a Peace Corps agroforestry extension agent for 3 years in Senegal. Mr. Sterner is the Treasurer of the International Society of Tropical Forestry, and past co-chair of the International Forestry Working Group of the Society of American Foresters. He speaks English, Spanish, and French.

The Treasurer is custodian of ISTF finances, receives and disburses ISTF funds, performs other customary duties of the office, and submits an annual financial report to the Board and Membership.

Regional representatives

The Regional Representatives attend meetings, vote, serve on standing committees, transmit information to and from the region they represent, and assist the Executive Committee with other functions as needed.



Daniel Kofi Abu Tropical Africa Representative

Daniel is a social, environmental, and green economy development expert. He has obtained MBA in International Business majoring in sustainable management from Amity University in India, a BA in Integrated Development Studies from the University for Development Studies, Ghana, and a postgraduate diploma in community leadership and development from George Mason University in the United States. He has several postgraduate certificates in climate change and green growth from the World Bank Institute for Development. He works as a National Project Coordinator for Tropenbos Ghana on the EU-funded project "Strengthening the capacities of Non-State Actors to improve FLEGT/VPA and REDD+ in Western Africa". He is also the Executive Director of Gode Consult, a consultancy firm specialized in forest livelihoods, green economy, agro-based value chains, and energy resources.



René Zamora-Cristales Tropical Americas Representative

Rene is a Senior Research Associate for the Global Restoration Initiative of World Resources Institute, Food, Forest, and Water Program. He leads the research agenda of Initiative 20x20, a country-led effort aiming to bring 20 million hectares of degraded land in Latin America and the Caribbean into restoration by 2020. He is also a courtesy assistant professor at Oregon State University (Department of Forest Engineering, Resources and Management). He holds a B.S. degree in Forest Engineering from Universidad del Valle de Guatemala, a Master of Science degree in Forest Resources with emphasis in Forest Economics from Universidad Austral de Chile and Doctoral degree (Ph.D.) in Forest Engineering from Oregon State University, USA. In October 2019 Rene received the IUFRO Outstanding Doctoral Research Award for his contributions to the forestry science.



Patrick Durst Tropical Asia-Pacific Representative

Patrick has more than 40 years of professional experience, mostly in Asia and the Pacific region (40+ countries), including positions with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), USDA Forest Service, U.S. Peace Corps, and various consulting assignments. His work has spanned from field-level agroforestry, bio-energy, and forest restoration projects, to program development and management, and information and technology exchange. Over the past four decades, he has developed, supported, and coordinated a wide range of forestry and natural resources programs in collaboration with government agencies, NGOs, academic institutions, the private sector, and various international and regional organizations.



Sheila Ward
Coordinator/
Executive Officer

Sheila is the frontline contact for ISTF members. With a Ph.D. in Ecology from the University of California Davis, Sheila has lived in Puerto Rico for 27 years and conducts research on the genetics of mahogany and Spanish cedar in Puerto Rico and Mexico. In Belize, she investigates the impact of the ancient Maya on tropical forest ecology with her husband Nicholas Brokaw. Sheila believes strongly in the value of ISTF to increase global community and information sharing, and to promote the conservation and sustainable use of tropical forest resources.

The Coordinator or Executive Officer is a non-voting Board member and performs various functions.



ISTF organized session at the ISTF-Yale Conference 2019 in New Haven Connecticut, USA

BY THE NUMBERS

MEMBERS

1463

COUNTRIES

102

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST
IN CHAPTER FORMATION

100

Potential and actual ISTF chapters



As of 10 December 2019, ISTF had 1463 members in 102 countries. The new Rwanda chapter was approved by the ISTF Board in September 2019. As of 12 December 2019, there were 100 expressions of interest for chapter formation in 42 countries, and chapters in formation included Liberia, Nepal, Mexico, Panama, Kenya, and Puerto Rico (more information on ISTF members and chapters [here](#)).

Committee updates

GOVERNANCE

The members of ISTF's Governance Committee in 2019 were Board members Patrick Durst and Mike Sterner.

2019 Goals

In 2019 the goals of the Governance Committee were to constitute the Committee with additional ISTF members, help develop new ISTF chapters, and move ISTF to register ISTF as a nonprofit organization to be able to commence fundraising. The Committee focused on promoting chapter formation.

2019 Accomplishments

Options for official registration (incorporation) of ISTF were investigated, and the Board decided to incorporate in Puerto Rico. Guidelines for chapter formation and model by-laws were developed. Draft chapter by-laws were reviewed and guidance was provided for formation of chapters in Rwanda, Nepal, Liberia, Mexico, and Kenya. The Board approved the formation of a new ISTF chapter in Rwanda and review continued of the other chapter proposals.

2020 Goals

The 2020 goals of the Governance Committee are to constitute the Committee with additional ISTF members, with the Chair handed over to non-Board member; formally incorporate ISTF in Puerto Rico; apply for tax-exempt status with the US Internal Revenue Service and the Puerto Rico Department of the Treasury (both are necessary); develop a code of ethics for ISTF members; and establish at least one new chapter in each of the three tropical geographical regions.

2020 Engagement Opportunities with the Governance Committee

The Committee needs help with promoting chapters and reviewing chapter proposals, and developing the ISTF Code of Ethics. If you are interested, please send a message to Pat Durst (pdurst.asiaforest@gmail.com) or Mike Stern (mssterner@gmail.com).

FINANCE

Members of ISTF's Finance Committee for 2019 included ISTF Board members Daniel Abu and Rene Zamora, and ISTF members Mousthapha Moussa, Richard Eba'a, and Erin Sills.

2019 Goals

In 2019 the ISTF Finance Committee set several goals, but was constrained by ISTF not yet being constituted as a legally registered non-profit organization. Efforts focused on exploring the funding ecosystem to be ready to prioritize opportunities once ISTF is registered. The objectives in 2019 focused on: (1) Identifying potential funding sources for ISTF activities; (2) Creating an Microsoft Excel template to record funding opportunities; and (3) Scheduling and inviting ISTF members to serve as president and vice president of the committee.

2019 Accomplishments

A template to map funding opportunities was created and the spreadsheet is available [here](#). The finance committee organized the first virtual meeting with participation of Erin Sills, Mousthapha Moussa and Richard Eba'a. At the meeting we introduced the vision and main scope of the finance committee and the potential activities. The structure and positions available in the committee were shared with the participants. The finance asked members to submit their names for committee leadership positions but only Mousthapha submitted his name to serve as vice president. We still need to fill other positions in the committee before we can move forward.

2020 Goals

The goals for 2020 include virtual meetings with committee members to select the committee leadership and to decide on the funding strategy. The committee is also exploring opportunities that do not require a tax-exempt organization. An opportunity at National Geographic Society was identified to develop a Podcast series. The Finance Committee will also invite board members to contribute ideas, once the ISTF incorporation is finalized and the organization can apply for grants. When we reach that stage, the Finance Committee will establish alliances with other organizations or networks to explore funding opportunities.

2020 Engagement Opportunities with the Finance Committee

An ISTF member is needed to serve as Chair of the Finance Committee. Individuals are needed to explore funding opportunities and to help write proposals for funding. If interested, please contact Daniel Kofi Abu (dannyrocks51@yahoo.com) or Rene Zamora-Cristales (rene.zamora@wri.org).

MISSION

Members of the ISTF Mission Committee for 2019 include Board members Ruth Metzel and Maria Paula Sarigumba. Other ISTF members who have indicated interest in this committee have been contacted, but so far, firm commitments have not emerged.

2019 Goals

The 2019 goals for the Mission Committee included constituting the Committee with additional participants from the broader ISTF membership, defining the ISTF niche, surveying the ISTF membership on needs and wants from the organization, drafting the ISTF communications strategy, redesigning the logo, developing a new website, and increasing the ISTF presence on social media.

2019 Accomplishments

The Mission Committee succeeded in further defining the ISTF niche through a membership survey with 82 responses (see “Perspectives from our members” below for preliminary findings). Initial analysis of the results were presented at the 2019 World Congress of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO 2019). Two meetings for ISTF members were organized at IUFRO 2019, and there were six ISTF-linked technical sessions at IUFRO 2019. Information on ISTF was shared at a session of the Society of American Foresters 2019 Annual Convention and at the 2019 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP25) in Madrid, Spain. The concept for the new website was further developed. Ten issues of ISTF Updates and three issues of ISTF Infolinks were sent to the ISTF membership. Blair Orr and Krishna Kumar sent out three issues of the SAF-ISTF Newsletter. Special thanks to Jacob Bukoski and Uchendu Eugene Chigbu who managed the ISTF Twitter account and to Teija Reyes who managed the ISTF Facebook group in 2019.

2020 Goals

The 2020 goals of the Mission Committee include constituting the Committee with additional participants from the broader ISTF membership; further defining the ISTF niche; drafting the ISTF communications strategy; redesigning the logo, annual reports, and flyers; organizing several events (session at ISTF-Yale 2020, SAF2020, other venues, webinars); and with the help of [GiveCamp New England 2020](#), launching a new ISTF website.

2020 Engagement Opportunities with the Mission Committee

You are invited to contribute to the ISTF Mission Committee’s establishment. We welcome volunteers to help with designs of logo, reports, flyers, presentation materials, to do an in-depth analysis of the membership survey results to further define the niche of the organization, develop webinars and podcasts, and to contribute to the ISTF publications and the website (to be opened soon). If interested, please contact Maria Paula Sarigumba (pausarigumba@gmail.com) or Ruth Metzel (ngolela@gmail.com).

Perspectives from our members

We are glad to hear your thoughts on how to move ISTF forward. Through an anonymous survey conducted from September to December 2019 with 82 respondents, we've learned that ISTF's niche is:

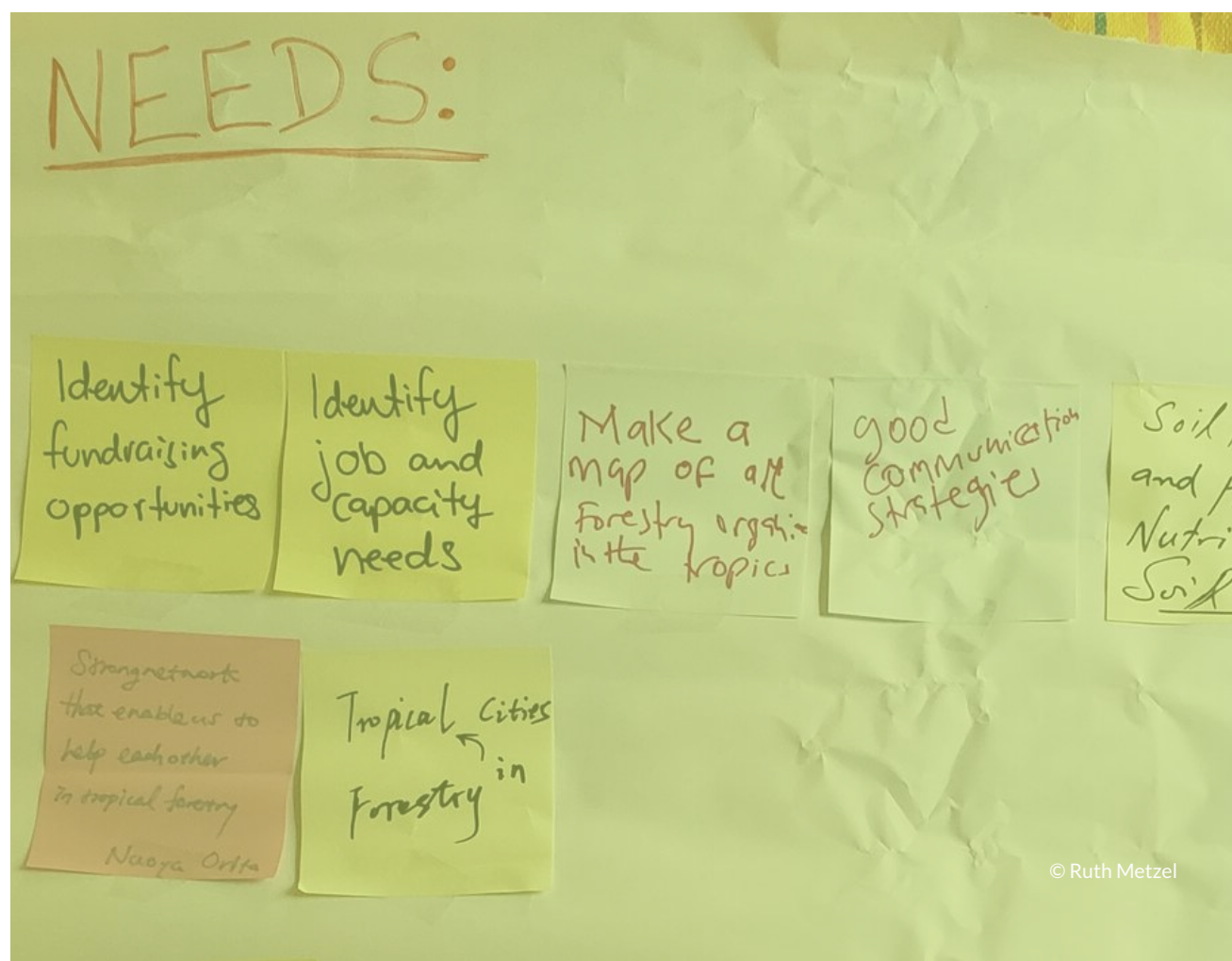
- To give priority to a set of values, norms, and policies related to human well-being, quality of life, and natural and built environments, supporting the development of socio-cultural learning niches to change perspectives, develop boundary-crossing skills, and cope with complexity in a critical and creative way.
- To provide a voice for individual tropical foresters rather than just organizations.
- To ensure foresters and associated organizations are informed of the best practices and reduce inventing the wheel.
- To encourage cross-cultural dissemination of local tropical forestry research and management.

Membership

We would like to invite you to join the International Society of Tropical Foresters (ISTF). Anyone with an interest in and commitment to the sustainable use and conservation of tropical forests and resources is encouraged to join! With its focus on being a communication network, ISTF allows members to connect with each other and recent work in the field. To become a member, fill out the ISTF membership form at <https://bit.ly/ISTFmembership>.

So far, more than 1463 people from around the world have joined. The newest ISTF Chapters are in Rwanda and Mexico, with at least eight other chapters under development. The enthusiastic response we have seen has been heartening, especially as the organization reactivates to face global challenges in inclusive and equitable ways. For now, ISTF membership will be dues-free, for simplicity and to encourage broad participation.

For questions and comments, please send a message to tropicalforesters@gmail.com. Please pass this message on to your contacts.



Reach out to us

We'd love to hear from you. If you have questions, comments, or ideas, please reach out to us:

 **tropicalforesters@gmail.com**

Follow our social media accounts:

 **tropicalforesters**

 **tropicalforesters**

 **@tropforester**

Join our community and engage with us in these discussion groups:

 **International Society of Tropical Foresters - ISTF**


 **International Society of Tropical Foresters (Central)**

Visit our website:

 **tropicalforesters.org**

A photograph of three people standing in front of a presentation screen. On the left is a man with glasses and a beard, wearing a light blue button-down shirt and a lanyard with a badge that reads 'IUFRO 2019' and 'KEITH MOSER'. In the center is a man with glasses, wearing a light blue button-down shirt and a lanyard with a badge that reads 'IUFRO 2019' and 'RENE ZAMORA'. On the right is a woman with blonde hair, wearing a dark blue patterned sleeveless top. The background screen displays contact information for 'Email global ISTF at: tropicalforesters@gmail.com' and 'Ruth: ngolela@gmail.com', along with Facebook and Twitter icons and the text 'tropicalforester'.

A photograph showing two women in conversation at a conference. The woman on the right, Ruth Metzel, is wearing a blue top and a black patterned cardigan, and is holding a small white card. The woman on the left is wearing a green patterned top and is holding a red and white folding fan. They are standing in front of a table with glasses and a white card. The background shows other people and a window with curtains. The text 'Ruth Metzel (right) introducing the ISTF to a colleague at the IUFRO 2019 World Congress' is overlaid on the bottom left of the image.



A selfie of Sheila Ward and her husband Nick Brokaw at the IUFRO 2019 World Congress

