

Peter Cook

By Peter Cook

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Greetings!

Recently, I graduated from

Cornell

University with a degree in philosophy and international relations. During my time in college, I had the opportunity to take many classes and participate in research projects that dealt with issues related to the developing world and Latin America in particular. Toward the latter half of my college career, I began to focus my interests by taking classes in Latin American economic history, global ethics, and human rights.

It is through my academic investigations of many of these topics that I have taken an interest in social and economic justice. In many areas of the developing world, issues of poverty and quality of life for rural peoples are directly related to and inseparable from issues of environmental conservation and protection, and sustainable development. Sometimes, directly working with and educating people who live and thrive off endangered land can be more helpful and effective than broad policy prescriptions made from far away. Before

I return to the classroom in a few years, I would like to spend some time on the ground learning firsthand about the problems that directly affect people living in poverty-stricken areas, and hopefully making an effort to enact some change. Just to tell you a bit more about myself, I've lived and worked abroad before by studying at the University of Seville in

Spain for a semester. I also worked in government relations consulting in

Beijing,

China during the summer of 2008. I plan on applying to law school next fall, and to eventually pursue a career in international humanitarian and human rights law.

In January of 2010, I will be embarking on a six months internship with Great Wilderness in the Esmeraldas Province of Ecuador. Great Wilderness has already done some amazing things working with a group of small-scale cocoa farmers called FONMSOEAM (Federation-Organization of Black and Mestizo Small Scale Cacao Farmers from Southwestern Esmeraldas), and I will be going there to serve as project manager of Great Wilderness' operations. My goal is to strengthen the organizational capacity of this farmer's cooperative. This will involve helping to connect them to and maintain relationships with international business prospects, teaching English language skills and Spanish literacy, helping to represent them in negotiations with foreign and domestic NGO's, business partners, and government organizations, and assisting them with grant writing and fundraising. I can only develop a true sense of where and in what capacity I am needed after observing their way of life and making inroads into becoming part of their community. I realize this will come with time.

I am extremely fortunate to be involved in this project. I already feel like I am part of the Great Wilderness family, and both Great Wilderness and FONMSOEAM have extended warm and welcoming hands of friendship in helping me with my pre-departure preparations. I feel lucky, enthusiastic, energized and ready for a challenge!

For family, friends, or anyone else who is interested in learning more about our work at FONMSOEAM, please contact me at pcook86@gmail.com. I hope to update this page frequently, to keep all who are interested aware of developments in the project.

