



### Africa's rainforest is under threat

The Congo Basin rainforest spans 2,500,000 km<sup>2</sup> over six countries, and is home to 1,000 threatened species. It is also the world's last tropical carbon sink. According to Lee White, Gabon's Minister of Environment, "If we lose the Congo Basin, we lose the fight against climate change."



Billions have been spent in the last 20 years on conservation efforts. And yet, these efforts have failed to end deforestation and biodiversity loss, while carbon emissions continue to mount, both in the rainforest and globally. Why?

Good decision-making is expensive. The time and money needed to find and interpret data on the world's second-largest rainforest is the key obstacle facing the conservation sector, which is fatally under-funded.

New York City's Central Park spends \$75m to manage 341 hectares, while the Democratic Republic of the Congo 'manages' around 100m ha of rainforest with only \$60m. At this scale, effective conservation is impossible. A lack of funding means decisions are not based on evidence, and outcomes are poor by default. As a result, unsuccessful and even contradictory policies continue to fail the Congo Basin.

Project Canopy is a non-profit giving environmental actors the data and analytics they need to make better decisions, thereby improving outcomes and increasing funding. We are environmental intelligence for the rainforest – the missing piece to the puzzle that is the Congo Basin conservation sector.

### Decision-makers need environmental intelligence

1. Decisions are not based on good data
2. Conservation outcomes suffer
3. Donors lose confidence that their money will be spent effectively
4. Much-needed funding goes elsewhere  
...and the cycle repeats itself

Governments, development organizations, international and local non-profits – these all need accurate, complete and timely analytics for their work in the Congo Basin. Most do not have the resources to identify which opportunities may have the greatest impact. How can they then hope to save the greatest number of trees, the greatest number of elephants, or the greatest amount of carbon for each euro or dollar spent?

Providing evergreen answers to such questions is expensive and time-consuming. Satellite images, species databases, laws, corporate contracts and land ownership must all be analyzed by ecologists, data scientists, GIS specialists, legal experts, and corporate investigators. Few have the capacity to do this.

### Project Canopy: Actionable insights for the rainforest

We are the impartial source of environmental intelligence on the Congo Basin. We begin by identifying and delivering solutions to stakeholders' analytical needs. We integrate these solutions into our public platform, giving the right data to the right people, at the right time, and in the right way.

By empowering local groups at the front lines of environmental defense – the Cameroonian, Congolese, and Gabonese organizations who are the most committed to saving their forests, but who have the fewest resources – we aim to not only improve their impact, but also bolster their own financial sustainability.



As we accumulate more solutions for more people, we will precisely define the exact threats facing the forest, and what is being done about them. This will not only save our audiences the scarce resources they spend on R&D, but, more importantly, increase conservation impacts across the board.

The capital we earn as a respected data provider will allow us to take an active role in the policy ecosystem itself. An unrivaled understanding of the rainforest and its decision-making processes will give Project Canopy a leading position from which to influence the region's environmental programs and policies.

Project Canopy is a non-profit, but we think like a data-driven tech startup. Customer validation, a process-based approach, and rapid deployment of solutions allow us to function as a force multiplier for conservation investments.

### **Making Project Canopy a reality**

Project Canopy has been vetted with stakeholders in WWF, Global Witness, Greenpeace, and local NGOs. Based on their feedback, and assisted by a dozen talented volunteers, we are developing two prototypes.

The first applies machine learning to satellite imagery, identifying deforestation – *by type* – in real time. The second identifies the alignment of science and law concerning threatened species. These will generate the equivalent of €1.4 million of value per year for the sector. But to truly reach Project Canopy's potential, investment is needed.

Our first funding cycle calls for €500,000 for a 12-month period. We will scale our prototypes to integrate forest cover, species, and carbon store datasets into our platform. We will also analyze all environmental laws governing the Congo Basin rainforest, including forest codes, species protection laws, and international treaties.

Our audiences will then be able to immediately identify the locations most in need of protection, the legal frameworks protecting these areas, and what needs to be done to increase the impact of their decisions.

### **Project Canopy is a scalable process**

Project Canopy will begin influencing policy within three years of its first funding cycle. Within five years, we will scale Project Canopy to cover all major forest ecosystems, starting with the Amazon and Southeast-Asian rainforests. In ten years, Project Canopy will be a global reference on the protection of forests, biodiversity, and carbon, with a proven ability to influence policy.

### **Who we are**

Co-founders [Jules Caron](#) and [Misha Lepetic](#) have been friends since first meeting in Bolivia in 1998. Jules has lived and worked in the Congo Basin as a campaigner for environmental and human-rights organizations since 2012. Misha has 25 years of experience in the information technology and services industry in New York. Not least, Project Canopy exists thanks to the efforts of our [contributors](#).

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