GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR THE EMERGENT “RIGHTS OF NATURE” MOVEMENT
TO HOLD ITS FIRST INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT
FOLLOWED BY A PUBLIC TRIBUNAL OF ACTUAL CASES
OTAVALO & QUITO, ECUADOR: JANUARY 13-17, 2014

Key leaders of the emergent nature rights movement are holding an international summit in Ecuador on January 13-17, 2014. Its twofold purpose is to analyze the experiences of communities in Ecuador, Bolivia, and United States that have already implemented “Rights of Nature” laws and to devise a unified global strategy for advancing the Rights of Nature movement around the world.

The summit will conclude on Friday, January 17, with a public Tribunal in Quito where key Rights of Nature cases will be heard, including the Chevron/Texaco case in Ecuador, the oil exploitation of Yasuni-ITT in Ecuador’s rainforest, and the threats to Australia’s Great Barrier Reef. Drawing on precedents established in other successful Rights of Nature cases – such as the one finding that the rights of the Vilcabamba River had been violated by pollution – the Tribunal will model how to adjudicate the rights of nature in courts of law.

The four-dozen principals attending the summit represent diverse disciplines, cultures, nations, and bioregions as part of the Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature. Among the attendees are Indian physicist Vandana Shiva, South African lawyer and author Cormac Cullinan, North American indigenous leader Tom Goldtooth, former Bolivian U.N. ambassador Pablo Solón, Canadian aboriginal actress Tantoo Cardinal, and U.S. community rights attorney Thomas Linzey. The group as a whole is comprised of economists, lawyers, scientists, indigenous leaders, community activists, nuns, actors, authors, and public officials hailing from Australia, Switzerland, South Africa, United States, Spain, Canada, India, Romania, Bolivia, Argentina, and England, as well as Ecuador.

The summit marks the first time leaders of the Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature are coming together since 2010 when they created the organization as a vehicle to help advance the cutting edge work that each was carrying out in his or her home country. The historic 2010 gathering that forged the Global Alliance also was held in Ecuador, the first nation in the world to adopt Rights of Nature in its Constitution, in 2008.

The Tribunal will be held on Friday, January 17, at Hotel Quito, in Quito, where the Global Alliance will also host a Press Conference to report the results of the summit and next steps for the Rights of Nature movement. The Press Conference is at 10:30 am. The Tribunal will consider seven cases and run from 8:30 am to 17:00 pm. Press kits for the Tribunal will be available.

“The Rights of Nature movement is a response in the order of magnitude necessary to end the legalized plundering that is ravaging our planet and imperiling our young and the young of all species,” says Robin R. Milam, Administrative Director of the Global Alliance for Rights of Nature.
GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR THE RIGHTS OF NATURE

“By recognizing nature’s right to exist and thrive, people can assert those rights on nature’s behalf, rejecting actions that permit harmful, unwanted development in their communities.”

Rights of Nature: Background
The Rights of Nature movement draws on indigenous wisdom in positing a new jurisprudence that recognizes the right of nature in all its forms to exist, persist, evolve and regenerate.

“A 40-year regime of environmental laws in the United States and other industrial nations has failed to protect against the escalating ravages evident around the world, including decimated species, depleted forest reserves, water shortages, and record-breaking hurricanes,” says Robin R. Milam, Administrative Director of the Global Alliance for Rights of Nature. “An entirely new approach is needed.”

Recognizing the rights of nature, which humans would have standing to enforce, reflects a shift in consciousness away from a legal system that treats nature as property for human use. “It is akin to the shift in consciousness – and change in laws – that took place when people said we should stop treating women, enslaved, or indigenous people as property,” Milam said. “And it is foundational: Human rights are meaningless without fresh water to drink, clean air to breath, safe food to eat.”

Local municipalities in the United States were the first to adopt laws establishing legal structures that recognized Rights of Nature, beginning in 2006 with Tamaqua Borough in Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania. Since then more than two-dozen U.S. communities have adopted local laws recognizing Rights of Nature, including Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, which in November of 2010 became the first major municipality in the United States to do so.

In September 2008, Ecuador became the first country in the world to recognize Rights of Nature in its constitution and Bolivia enacted a law that recognizes rights of Mother Earth.

Nearly 100 grassroots organizations in the Americas, Africa, Asia, Australia, and Europe are members of the Global Alliance for Rights of Nature, advancing the Rights of Nature movement in their municipalities, counties, provinces, and countries.

The Rights of Nature movement is grounded conceptually in an understanding that humans are one part of an interdependent community of life on Earth. Human existence—in all its social, economic, industrial, cultural, and governmental manifestations—is wholly dependent on the health of rivers, plants, animals, oceans, forests, atmosphere, microbes, and other ecosystems and beings that with us comprise our living planet.

Beyond enlightened self-interest, the Rights of Nature movement also emerges philosophically and spiritually out of a sense of the wonder and awe that the natural world has inspired in humans for millennia, captured in art, music, and poetry—and our sense of the sacred.

For more, see Global Alliance for Rights of Nature at www.therightsofnature.org.