

# Smithsonian opens climate change lab in Panama

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The Smithsonian Institution opened its first lab outside the United States on Wednesday, a \$20-million research center in Panama that will study the effects of climate change on tropical forests.

Billed as the largest scientific laboratory in Central America, it will monitor carbon dioxide levels and study how trees are changing with the changing climate, said Matthew Larsen, director of the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute.

Funded by private donations and US government funds, the Washington-based institute's latest venture is located in the central Panamanian town of Gamboa, along the route of the Panama Canal.

It will also study the impact of climate change on animals, officials said.

"We are extremely happy with this investment by the Smithsonian in Panama because it expands our capacity for studying ecosystems and helps better understand our biological diversity," Panamanian Environment Minister Mirei Endara told AFP.

Panama, one of the most biodiverse countries on Earth, is threatened by [climate change](#) as well as deforestation and growing urbanization.

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