

'A Holistic Approach to Sustainability': Mijenta Tequila Collaborates With Indigenous Leaders to Protect Jaguar Habitats in Ecuador



(CTK via AP Images)

Altos Planos, the award-winning spirits producer behind Mijenta Tequila and Tres Tribus Mezcal, is teaming up with local indigenous leaders in Ecuador to guarantee jaguars a better future.

International jaguar populations have decreased by over 20% in the past 14 years, recently going extinct in El Salvador and Uruguay. In Ecuador — where coffee and cacao harvesting has [severely depleted](#) their habitat — jaguars have been declared critically endangered.

Deep within the Amazon headwaters, the Sharamentsa community is now organizing a fundraiser to protect their forest ecosystem. The novel program revolves around "[Biocultural Jaguar Credits](#)," purchasable donations backed by a monitoring and reporting plan that will document conservation efforts in the community. The end goal is to create a sustainable ecological model to protect the area's 10,000-hectare jaguar habitat.



Camera trap photograph of a jaguar from the project in Sharamentsa. (Photo: Amazon Sacred Headwaters)

Approximately \$43,500 worth of credits have already been funded of a \$75,000 goal. One of the primary backers in Altos Planos, makers of the world's first [B-corp-certified](#) tequila.

"Since we launched in September 2020, Altos Planos has taken a holistic approach to sustainability and prioritized innovation around responsible business practices. We are extremely excited to support this project, which we hope will help to introduce a new standard for Indigenous-led environmental protection programs and transparent, verifiable and meaningful credit issuance," says Elise Som, Co-Founder and Director of Sustainability for Altos Planos.

Domingo Peas, president of the Amazon Sacred Headwaters Alliance, imagines the jaguar credit initiative as the beginning of a larger movement.

"This pilot conservation program and project finance credit issuance is not merely a standalone initiative but a precursor to broader conservation efforts. Its success could lead the way for initiatives such as the 'Achuar Nation Forest Generation Fund,' covering 650,000 hectares, and potentially expand to encompass the entire Amazon Sacred Headwater Alliance, totaling 30 million hectares."

Thousands of miles north in Mexico, the unexpected connection between jaguars and tequila has already found footing.

In May 2023, McCauley Williams debuted the aptly named [Alma Del Jaguar Tequila](#), a brand that donates a portion of its proceeds to the Northern Jaguar Project (NJP) situated along the US-Mexico border in Sonora.