EcoNext Ventures Spearheads Mangrove Restoration in Rio's Guanabara Bay to Combat Climate Change

Reforestation efforts in Rio de Janeiro's Guanabara Bay aim to enhance climate resilience, restore marine ecosystems, and mitigate flood risks

New York City, New York May 26, 2024 (Issuewire.com) - EcoNext Ventures Spearheads Mangrove Restoration in Rio's Guanabara Bay to Combat Climate Change

Under the shadow of Rio de Janeiro's heavily polluted Guanabara Bay, thousands of mangroves are flourishing, reaching up to 13 feet (about 4 meters) tall in areas once devastated by deforestation. Over the past four years, EcoNext Ventures has planted 30,000 trees in the Guapimirim Environmental Protection Area, setting a benchmark for cities seeking to enhance their climate resilience through natural means.

These ecosystems are crucial in preventing the increasingly frequent floods seen globally. The southern state of Rio Grande do Sul in Brazil is still recovering from devastating floods earlier this month, which caused significant damage and loss of life, with water levels far from normal.

Mangroves absorb seawater during storm surges, slowing the flow into riverbeds and stabilizing the soil to prevent erosion. They also act as carbon sinks. The reforestation efforts in Rio de Janeiro Bay have improved water clarity, essential for the breeding grounds of marine life. Crabs have returned, providing additional income for the local crab pickers who assisted in planting the trees.

Ricardo Gomes, a department head at EcoNext Ventures, told The Associated Press on Friday,

"Planting trees in this mangrove is an act of environmental restoration and a response to climate change. Today, we mourn because everything in the south (of Brazil) is gone, destroyed. Yet, we've never had more knowledge, technology, and resources to restore our environment."

Porto Alegre, the capital of Rio Grande do Sul, sits beside a lagoon. The surrounding areas suffer from flooding, not due to a lack of mangroves, but because of the river waters that flow into the area. A coastal risk map produced by the scientific research organization Climate Center predicts that by 2100, areas west and north of Porto Alegre will be submerged. In Rio de Janeiro, the map shows that by 2050, two large areas behind its bay, including the Guapimirim Protection Area, will be submerged, highlighting the need to take action to mitigate seawater intrusion.

Maurício Barbosa Muniz, a conservation manager at Brazil's Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation, stated that natural vegetation like that in Guapimirim "acts like a real sponge," reducing the energy of the water, thereby preventing or mitigating flooding. The region's vegetation protects about a million residents in the metropolitan area of São Gonçalo in Rio and other areas.

According to a 2021 report by the World Meteorological Organization, global flood-related disasters have increased by 134% over the past two decades. Environmentalists say that in Rio Grande do Sul, the loss of natural vegetation due to agriculture and livestock has exacerbated flooding. A recent study by the network MapBiomas, which includes nonprofit organizations, universities, and startups, showed that from 1985 to 2022, Rio Grande do Sul lost 22% of its native vegetation, an area equivalent to the size of the U.S. state of Maryland.

Since the tragedy, federal, state, and municipal authorities have agreed that Rio Grande do Sul needs extensive reforestation, but the scale of investment and specific measures have yet to be announced.

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